

Why Read

Together?

On Companions,
Co-conspirators,
and Breathing Words

HumDrumPress



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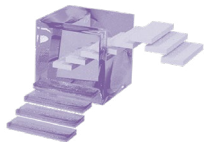
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A Declaration of Love for Reading: An Introduction

Books as Companions

Reading found its roots during school breaks, when we perched behind grey metal shelves filled with dusty volumes. It emerged during family visits, when the grown-up's dull chatter faded into a familiar incomprehensibility. During long, jittery nights, when we sat awake hovering a dim flash-light over the worn-out pages of the newest gem we had found in the local library – just one more page – before sleep weighed down our heavy eyelids.

Sniffing the comforting, earthy-acidic smell of paper, our gaze clung to the letters – the soft curves of an *a*, the rigid edges of a *z* – that, like a boat, carried us to distant places. Our eyes jumped from word to word, sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph, accelerating our journey to an *elsewhere* – a place where we were not being watched, evaluated, handled. A place where imagination was the very matter that people and landscape were carved from. A place where us and our surroundings faded in importance when compared to the great adventures and perilous passages that the protagonists of the story undertook. And, holding our breath, page after page rustled gently as they turned between our eager hands.

Books accompanied us wherever we went. All too frequently, our hands reached towards the bottom of our school bag to feel their firm, reassuring presence. Even when reading was painful, when we strenuously chewed through the words of a text or sobbed because our favourite character died, we clung to the pages regardless. Increasingly, our books started bearing the traces of the places we took them to. Stains of tea spilled across the paper, traces of sand in the creases, markers smudged into the margins, the corners scuffed and rounded. We learned to identify our favourite books by their smells, by the particular fragrance the specific mixture of ink, glue, and wood-pulp produced. The characters of our favourite stories became our dear friends and developed a life of their own in our heads, whether they (or their authors) knew it or not.

Later, the fiction of the world around us revealed itself. Just like the stories in books, many of the systems, narratives, and infrastructures we were forced to navigate, that were presented to us as inevitable and unquestionable, had been made up by *someone*. Maybe not by an individual author who conjured fantastical places

and characters, but by historical processes and by particular groups of people with certain interests. It was then that theory came into our lives, with a desire to make sense of the stories that were unfolding every day around us, in distant but connected places. Rather than wanting to escape the world, a reader of theory very much wants to be in the world. Theory gives the reader agency to understand the world around them differently, to understand relationships between ideas, histories, people, and systems, and our place within them. The reader of theory is a reader not only situated in the world – in *this* world – but one who is committed to it through love, and ready to assume responsibility for it.

This is where books arise as the reader's companion. As a place to go back to when lost while travelling. As a home to reside in during times of need. As a guide to consult amidst turbulence. As a friend to confide in at the end of a day. Books are voices from the past directed to the future, to a future reader who might pick them up in a library, book shop, free shelf, or dusty attic, in a different time and place, looking for a voice of guidance from the past.

Of course, reading has not been like this for everyone. For many it has been daunting, imposed by an outside authority, a test posed to gauge competence. Those with learning disabilities had to laboriously decipher sentence by sentence, under the scrutinous gaze of a teacher or caretaker. A few simply found it boring, palling in comparison to the neighbourhood playground. Many didn't have the privilege of publicly funded or community organised free-for-minors libraries, or the stacked bookshelves of well-read family members. Thus books came to be known as luxury items only accessible to the wealthy. Some read in secret, despite the prohibitions. Some were fervent when it came to telling stories and listening to them, yet have never had the privilege to learn how to read and write. Some never read themselves, but were often read to. Some found their way to books later. Some are still not quite into reading but have made a commitment to give it a chance.

How We Read in Reading Rhythms Club

From the often-lonely reading experiences of our youth emerged the desire for communal spaces where we could share our passion for the written (and spoken) word. As students of the Willem de Kooning art academy in Rotterdam (The Netherlands), a context in which, though theory is often referred to, reading takes a marginal role, we gave birth to Reading Rhythms Club (RRC) as a place to share the joys (and frustrations) of reading with each other.

In its early days, Reading Rhythms Club was a monthly gathering where everyone who joined was invited to suggest texts they loved, found intriguing, couldn't understand, or absolutely hated, to discuss, appreciate, or attempt to decipher, together. Snacks always played a central role in RRC and so did the focus on the playful exploration of reading with friends and strangers (who would often become friends later on), without the imposed hierarchies of the classroom or the requirements of reading and analysing the text beforehand. We began RRC during the Covid-19 pandemic, which brought about logistical questions around organising people in physical space and made us adopt an experimental set-up from the onset.

In RRC, we aim to breathe life into words through our voices, to understand what a given concept, narrative, or proposal can mean in relation to our context and lived experience. We are especially curious to understand how this can be reflected in our actions. Central for us is the desire to dismantle the idea that reading is something one does alone, in isolation, to form a fully fleshed-out understanding of reality, and instead approach texts as communal spaces of learning that embrace tangents, discussions and complexities. We are intrigued by the idea of situated reading. How do words that travel through bodies, minds and the in-between create associations, meanings, and affects in relation to the places where they are read? How does the softness of the grass, or the stench of petroleum in the air, or the faint laughter of a large group of people passing by influence the reading experience, allowing words to seep out of text and into our fleshy world? Or bring forth the world around us back into the text? As Renée Turner puts it in her text "Slow, Situated & Reparative Reading" that we read together in her beautiful garden house to the crackling sound of a fire in November 2022:

"[...] slow reading does not happen in a vacuum or in the imagined ethereal solitude of the mind. It is a situated and embodied practice operating from the perspective that all texts are permeable and influenced by material conditions, place, time, mood, memories, histories and the present. Borrowing from Donna Haraway, it is the opposite of "a view from above, from nowhere." Instead of objectivity, it holds dear the modesty of a partial view and the premise that context matters and matter forms and informs."¹

In line with Renée's words, since we left the art academy behind we have tried to find a different location for each reading session that complements and grounds the text we are reading. This approach has taken us on a journey through different gardens, living rooms, studios, cultural spaces, parks, and squats

in Rotterdam. Sometimes we find places with many connections to the topic we are engaging with, other times this proves to be difficult. For each reading session we invite one or several guests that provide a specific angle to the topic we want to explore together. Often, we are co-conspiring the form and content of our sessions together with our guests. In this way we owe many inspiring references, methods, and learnings to our collaborators. Interestingly, the spaces where we host our sessions and the invited guests tend to attract their own specific audiences, creating different constellations of people for every session, alongside our regular RRC guests.

Our desire is to create spaces of learning outside of the academy, especially since education, and particularly university education, is all but universal. We aim to provide resources and spaces of exchange to collectively understand better how the world around us functions, how the often violent infrastructures we are navigating are shaped, and what possibilities for refusal and of creating alternatives there are. A central concern for us is the question of how to make reading more accessible, since for many people reading is difficult, unfamiliar, scary, boring, or associated with snobbishness. But access also goes beyond that, since some people are bedridden due to chronic illness, unable to enter certain spaces, or have disabilities that make reading near impossible. 'Access', in this case, means access to resources and the tools to make use of them, but equally access to spaces both physical and digital. Creating access means acknowledging and working with a reality that doesn't prioritise able-bodiedness. In any project, access needs to be prioritised and conceptualised from the onset and it is a practice we are continually trying to improve upon. We are thankful to everyone who has allowed us to learn in this regard.

We are striving to provide access within RRC in multiple ways, but we also have many shortcomings in this regard. Primarily, it must be noted that not all the venues we held sessions in so far have been physically accessible to wheelchair users or people with reduced mobility. People can tune in remotely through a live radio broadcast for most reading sessions, but this method doesn't facilitate interaction. No preparation is required for RRC sessions, which lowers the threshold of joining. After each session, we write and publish short creative reflections on the event that we refer to as 'digestions'. These are digitally archived together with the radio broadcasts and reading materials so they can be accessed later on. During the sessions, we approach reading in a playful manner, make space for questions and clarifications, and place an emphasis on

exploratory reading methods that favour collective learning over the idea of gaining 'mastery' of a text. However, the fact that RRC sessions are held in English can make it difficult to engage, as it is not the native tongue of many of our participants (to reiterate, we are based in the Netherlands). This also grounds the project in an international context, which excludes a large part of the population who doesn't speak English or doesn't feel comfortable enough to read and discuss in this language. Consequently, our participants are often young, of a higher educational background, and have an interest in art or creative practices. We have a strong desire to experiment with ways of making RRC more accessible and create possibilities for audiences to join who we are presently not reaching, especially in the context of language and disability justice, but also considering the high threshold the concept of a 'reading group' can have.

Why Read?

Reading is a site of trauma for many people, and not without reason. Often, first experiences with reading are associated with coercion, performance, and figures of authority. Additionally, attention spans are only getting shorter due to the constant streams of images and information that we are exposed to online, making it harder to engage in the slow, deep focus of reading. Writer Ismatu Gwendolyn argues that the ruling class benefits from the illiteracy of the masses and even works to systemically ensure it. Illiterate people are less likely to question systems of thought and the material infrastructures around them and are therefore easier to oppress.² Ismatu Gwendolyn argues that:

"[I]n this iteration of world-making, proper literacy in reading and writing (as well as financial literacy) are often the difference between agency, freedom-seeking, and autonomy for self-determination and working in someone else's world-making in abysmal conditions perpetually. Which means: If the empire wanted you to have a good relationship with reading, they would ensure one."³

This highlights the urgency of building our own infrastructures for learning together and for fostering reading as a tool that helps us to collectively make sense of the world. For Ismatu Gwendolyn, understanding how the world around us functions also gives us the possibility to engage in world-making of our own: to strengthen our imaginative muscles and envision how things could be different and to learn about the tools to put this vision in practice. As we can learn from bell hooks, through reading (and theorising) one can

'make sense' of one's own experience navigating the world, and find solace, joy, and strategies of survival:

"Living in childhood without a sense of home, I found a place of sanctuary in "theorizing," in making sense out of what was happening. I found a place where I could imagine possible futures, a place where life could be lived differently. This "lived" experience of critical thinking, of reflection and analysis, became a place where I worked at explaining the hurt and making it go away. Fundamentally, I learned from this experience that theory could be a healing place."⁴

Reading as collectively 'making sense' for us doesn't mean only engaging with the written word but also the entirety of our surroundings. Reading here means being attentive to infrastructures, people, systems, and emotions, and attempting to understand their origins, context and histories. We also underline the collective aspect of reading because it removes the programmed isolation, which is distilled into us, as well as the individualised consumption of information. Fostering spaces where we can support each other with deciphering what is complex, with digesting what is difficult, with sitting with what is heartbreaking, and with sharing what gives us joy, can prepare the ground for building a different reality together. Alone we are more vulnerable to being taken advantage of, subjected to the roles of producers and consumers in a system that seeks only the accumulation of wealth for the few. Together we can create a world that places the well-being and dignity of all living beings at its centre.

Through reading, we practice the embodiment of different realities by immersing ourselves in people's stories and reflections, the worlds that spring from their lives and minds. Especially when reading out loud, reading becomes a bodily act, as the world buzzes through our lungs and lips when spoken. Even when reading silently, we might mouth parts of a sentence or feel our muscles twitch at a familiar consonant. Paper and ink might seem like dead matter, but words are very much alive. We fill our bodies with them and breathe them out with every exhale, as images and emotions flood through our mind. This makes reading an exercise in empathy. We come out of it having been impacted by the many lives we have gotten to experience, of those who provided us with company and insights by inviting us into their worlds.

The Content of this Book

We hope that the book you are holding in your hands right now can be a companion to you, that it can accompany you while travelling in the pocket of your coat, resting on your bedside table, or getting lost in the bottom of your bag, only to reemerge again months later, imbued with new meanings and associations. We hope that it sparks some reflections on reading and the role it plays in your life. We hope that it instils in you an irresistible desire to gather friends, comrades, lovers, or strangers, and engage in experimental forms of collective reading with them. This book was written for voracious and fearful readers alike, and for those who would never use the word 'reader' to describe themselves. We especially encourage the latter to give the reading methods you can find in this book a chance, they might surprise you or change how you perceive your relationship to reading.

Events are ephemeral, at risk of being lost to fading memory. This book gives a body of paper and ink to the reading sessions we organised in 2024. It facilitates them to travel and be shared, read silently or out loud, alone or collectively. The RRC sessions were arranged in the form of a year-long curriculum composed of three thematic blocks of three reading sessions each. This set-up is also reflected in the structure of this book. Each session is visually framed by graphic elements that were initially created for the event announcement posters. They are based on images that were shared by our contributors and later remixed into the RRC visual identity. Every event is recorded through a 'digestion': a written record that tries to not only capture the set-up and the content of the event, but also the atmosphere and anecdotal observations, in an attempt to *digest* – to reflect on and filter the collective experience through a subjective lens. Initially, these 'digestions' were published online as a means of archiving our events and to give glimpses of them to those who couldn't attend in person.

Next to the 'digestions' and images of each session, you can find the 'check-in questions' and 'reading methods' we employed throughout our events. We began each session with a check-in question to get to know who is in the room and give people space to warm their voices up when speaking to the collective. The check-in questions create a bridge between a given topic and people's personal experiences, serving as an introduction to each other and the topic at hand. They also make it easier to break through the fear of 'saying something wrong' that often lingers in

reading groups. For each of the nine reading sessions, we developed, adapted, and experimented with different reading methods. These methods allowed for different ways of collectively being with text, of approaching reading not only as a 'skill' to decipher and ingest information, but as an ongoing process that filters, modifies, shapes, takes apart, and gently cradles words and meanings. The reading voice features not as a neutral carrier of information, but as an active agent in the process of constructing narratives and relations. This embodied activity of reading is part of the process that contributes to how sense is made, through the mind and the senses. We encourage you to activate, adapt, and modify these methods and employ them in your own reading practice. At the end of the book there is an overview of the texts we read or engaged with each session for further inspiration.

The different reading blocks are featured in chronological order. The first reading block, **Guts, Tongues, Teeth** took place between February and May 2024 and focused on embodied and oral forms of text. Through our reading session "ReThreading Nanzi's Web" with Leomar Imperator and Julian Crestian, we learned about the rich storytelling traditions around the West African trickster god Ananzi and experimented with performative methods of orally passing on stories.

Together with Yusser al Obaidi we read recent Gazan poetry and reflected on our relationship to witnessing through writing exercises in the reading session "My Feelings Are a Witness", at KIOSK Rotterdam.

During "Solidarity Hums", we engaged with a beautiful text written by our collaborators Golnar Abbasi and Arvand Pourabbasi of WORKNOT! that speaks about solidarity in relationship to the voice, and together we shared memories of protests and traced genealogies of chants.

Shadowy Infrastructures, our second reading block, took place between June and September 2024. It explored invisible infrastructures of power and violence as well as webs of refusal and care. During the event "Wreading Geofinance", facilitated with Sami Hammana, we learned about speculative finance and traced the connections between the historical Westerhaven area in Rotterdam and colonial trade, the advent of finance, and the banking sector more broadly.

Together with the volunteers of the Doe-Het-Zelf Werkplaats, we read about the importance of building mutual aid infrastructures and discussed dynamics in grassroots collectives in the session "How Many Friends Does it Take to Build a Frame?".

During “Reading Between the Lines” with Cultural Workers Unite, we read about how metaphors are used to mask gentrification as a natural or benevolent process and analysed the language of policy documents, newspaper articles, and development plans.

The last block **Queerdom** was organised in November and December 2024 and looked at different facets of queer existence. In our session “Wormholes, Time-warps, and Unruly Tides”, we embarked on a spatial reading choreography through snippets of text that dealt with how growing up queer turns ageing upside-down, how capitalist modernity imposes standardised time, and how experiences of trauma and neurodivergence produce alternative temporalities.

In “A Seat at the Table”, we gathered with Sofia Carnelli of Queer Rotterdam and Katayun Taraporevala around the dinner table to engage in an experimental reading menu on queer community building and activism, with an emphasis on the role of food in forging connections.

Finally, together with Sam Portnoy from Queer Feminist Books, we learned about the concept of homonationalism – the way western countries use notions of gender equality and LGBTQI+ rights to portray themselves as superior to Global Southern, often muslim countries, and try to justify violent interventions – and reflected on how we observe this phenomenon in mainstream media.

To open the conversation on the importance of collective reading further to some of our collaborators, we invited Yusser al Obaidi, Golnar Abbasi, and Sofia Carnelli over for tea and ended up talking for many hours. You can find a shortened and edited version of this conversation split into two parts between the reading blocks. We dove into our early reading experiences, exchanged book recommendations, and talked about how reading is inherently embedded in an openness for confrontation and willingness for transformation. The conversation also touched upon books as medicine, language as space, written words as vessels of time travel, and text as a community of voices.

The Context of This Book

To tell you more about the voices behind RRC whose bodies are bent over their screens typing the introduction you are currently reading (in a different time and space), we are Senka Milutinović and Julia Wilhelm. Senka (they/them) is a designer, writer, and researcher, from Serbia. Julia (she/her) is a cultural worker, artist, and organiser who comes from Germany. We both have a complicated

relationship to our countries of origin and their politics (as well as most countries, enmeshed in a global imperialist system in different ways). We both have a higher education degree in the field of art and design and work as freelancers in unstable work situations. We both experience chronic pain and are trying to work against the ableism that capitalism has instilled into us. We are both white and trying to unlearn the harmful things whiteness taught us.

RRC initially brought us together and, next to an inspiring and fruitful collaboration, a beautiful friendship emerged out of it. While we had been organising RRC for a long while without any monetary resources, sustained by volunteer labour from us and our collaborators (as well as everyone chipping in for snacks), we received funding from Stimuleringsfonds and the Rotterdam municipality for the RRC curriculum we put together in 2024 and for the making of this book. This book is also very much a product of the city of Rotterdam, where we have been living for a number of years at the point of writing this and where (almost) all of the reading sessions we organised so far have been taking place. Many of the spaces, conversations, friendships, and resources present there have therefore also informed the content of this book.

We consider it important to give some context on who we are to highlight in which ways our own biases might seep into this book despite our best efforts to confront them. Our position is not neutral. And, like we learned earlier from Donna Haraway, who is also the first author we read with RRC, there is no “*vision from everywhere and nowhere*.”⁵ Much like our vision, our voices are grounded in our bodies, given shape by our experiences, contextualised by the position we inhabit, and, ultimately, driven by our desire to learn, transform, and grow together.

These are the abbreviated references, for the full sources, please go to page 116.

¹ Renée Turner (author), Michelle Teran, Marc Herbst, Vivian Sky Rehberg & the Promiscuous Care Study Group (editors). *Slow, Situated & Reparative Reading*, 122–129. 2024.

² Ismatu Gwendolyn. *you’ve been traumatized into hating reading*. 2024.

³ Ibid.

⁴ bell hooks. *Theory as Liberatory Practice*, 59–75. 1994.

⁵ Donna Haraway. *Situated Knowledges*, 575–599. 1988.

This book would not have been possible without Amy Gowen and Wibke Bramesfeld from HumDrumPress, who accompanied us through the process as kindred spirits, with gentle guidance, lots of patience, and useful insight. This is our first time publishing at this scale, and this was a dream collaboration by all means.

Thanks to all our collaborators who really formed the core of this curriculum by bringing in references, methods, lots of background knowledge, as well as their beautiful presences. Thanks to Leomar Imperator, Julian Crestian, Yusser al Obaidi, Golnar Abbasi and Arvand Pourabbasi of WORKNOT! collective, Sami Hammana, the volunteers of the Doe-Het-Zelf Werkplaats, with a special thanks to Tomi and Christian who facilitated the process, Lila Athanasiadou of Cultural Workers Unite, Sofia Carnelli of Queer Rotterdam, Katayun Taraporevala, and Sam Portnoy of Queer Feminist Books.

Thanks to all the people working for, with, and at the spaces throughout Rotterdam that have generously hosted our various reading sessions and facilitated our communication with these spaces. Thanks to Gemaal op Zuid and Janneke Absil, KIOSK Rotterdam and Flip Driest, Maurits for hosting us at the Elevatorhuis, Catu and its squatters, Roodkapje and its team, Poortgebouw and its residents as well as Snackbar Frieda, where we held an Open Book session together with HumDrumPress reflecting on the process of making this book.

Thank you to Lea Novi, our photographer, who documented one reading session per block with great care and precision, resulting in the beautiful pictures you can find in the image spreads of this book.

Thanks to Juliette Douet and Carla Arcos, with whom the idea of starting a reading group first emerged on a FlixBus to Amsterdam, and to Arimit Bhattacharya and Julian Crestian who supported RRC during its early days and have remained faithful guests ever since.

Thanks to Michelle Teran and Renée Turner, with whom we held previous reading sessions, and whose practices and reflections around collective reading deeply inspired and influenced us.

Special thanks also to Stimuleringsfonds NL (The Creative Industries Fund NL) and Gemeente Rotterdam (Municipality of Rotterdam) for generously funding our reading curriculum and this publication.

Thanks also to Sonia de Jager and Michelle Teran for proof-reading our funding application.

We are deeply grateful to the many writers and sources we have read that have impacted and changed how we view the world. These sources would not be available to us, without the work of many people who made those sources accessible outside of institutional walls, whether that be through legal or illegal means and we would like to extend our gratitude towards them as well. In the lineage of this tradition, this publication is open source and accessible on the website of HumDrumPress, free for you to circulate and share, to as many people as possible.

Thanks to everyone who attended Reading Rhythms Club, whether it be once, or for every session we hosted. Your presence, curiosity, and knowledge taught us what friendship, community and learning together can be.

Block 1:

February–May 2024

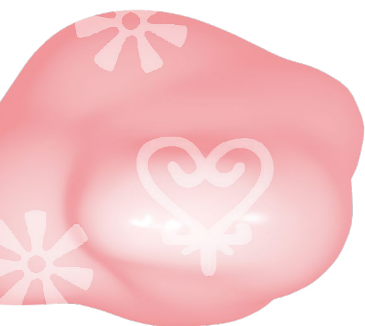
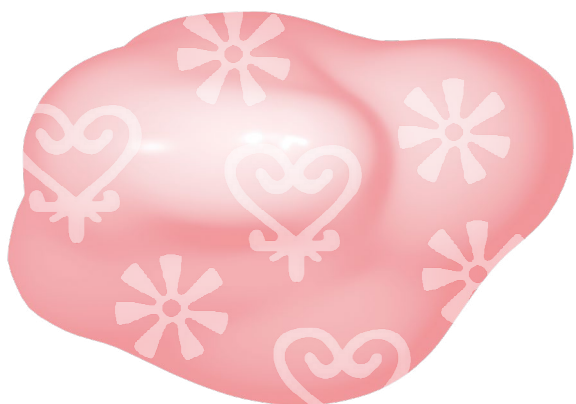
The guts it takes to make your voice heard.
The tongues that translate movements to words, words to words, words to action.
The teeth to bite down on and chew through.

Guts, Tongues, Teeth, the first block of our reading program focused on (spoken) words as they travel through the body and are carried by voices. At times in chorus, at times in sequence, ruminating solidarity and possibilities of kinship. Often spoken rhythmically, sometimes off-beat, storytelling, poetry, and chants featured as witnesses of struggle and heritages of resilience.

Guts
Tongues
Teeth

Reading Rhythms, ReThreading Nanzi's web

A Performative Storytelling
of Ananzi Tales



With Julian Crestian
and Leomar Imperator

Reading Rhythms, ReThreading Nanzi's Web

February 25th 2024, Gemaal op Zuid

22

On a Sunday in late February we were welcomed into the large, luminous space of Gemaal op Zuid, a former water pumping station in the south of Rotterdam that is now home to the Afrikaanderwijk Coöperatie: a neighbourhood cooperative that focuses on sustainable local production, knowledge exchange, and cultural development based on shared responsibility and participation. We gathered against the backdrop of Gemaal's exhibition "Cova da Moura" by Marie-Louise Hodge, which featured vibrant photographs of a self-built neighbourhood in Lisbon. On the bar, a colourful buffet of freshly-made hot and fragrant corn flour arepas, reskoek, arepas di pampuna, vegetables, fruits, cheeses, and sauces was spread out.

Two children of Curaçao, our collaborators Leomar Imperator and Julian Crestian are artists who often work as a duo and shake the legs of their ancestral spider god. In their radio show "Kwen ta kwe ku aNanzi" they analyse Ananzi stories with frequent guests. For our reading session, they traced the origin of myths surrounding the spider-god Ananzi, a trickster figure, back to the Akan-Ashanti people of present-day Ghana. Later, these stories were carried to the Caribbean through the transatlantic slavetrade. Being transmitted through oral tradition, they were transformed through time and continuous reinterpretation by their narrators. Often rhythmically told, Ananzi stories might also be performed as songs, and accompanied by instruments. The written records were mostly created by priests, who filtered the stories through their own, often colonial lenses.

Participants could choose from a stack of transcribed stories and were invited to animate them through voice and movement. After reading the stories together, small groups experimented with adapting and transforming the stories into short performances. Soon the space filled with the buzz of rehearsals and recitals. Most groups chose a theatrical approach, embodying the different characters of the story. Some performances contained musical elements, all were humorous. In the plays, we witnessed Ananzi trick the terrifying Cha Tiger into letting him ride on his back, getting stuck in the stomach of a cow when trying to steal her fat, and twirling the devil by his tail. It was surprising to see how those who were shier quickly opened up.

Many participants who grew up in the Caribbean recorded having a conflicted relationship to Ananzi, since the popular figure lacks any sense of morality. Even though he often tricks the powerful,

he also betrays common people. Together we wondered if children's stories should promote certain values and ideas, and if yes, which ones, and how?

- “ Many years ago Cha Tiger, the tiger, did not live in the woods, but among the people. Everybody was afraid of him. When they would see Cha Tiger come around the corner, they would scatter. One evening, a group of people was sitting under a big tamarind tree. The conversation was about Cha Tiger. One of them said: “You know, that guy is very strong and I don’t trust him one bit. He must be eating a lot. I’m scared of him.”
- “Ai, you’re crazy! What could Cha Tiger do to you? Only roar. I’m not afraid of him at all. Of course, he has to eat a lot. Such a big body needs a lot of fuel, otherwise he’d be too weak to even walk. I’ll bet you that I can sit on his back, the way I can sit on the back of a dumb ass.”
- It was Nanzi who spoke these words. The people were jostling each other, laughing out loud.
- “You, Nanzi? You’re kidding. He could demolish you! Stop talking nonsense!”
- “I’m not kidding and I’m not bragging either. I’ll show you. Tomorrow I’m riding on his back. He’ll take me all the way to Shon Arei.” ”

Nilda Geerdink-Jesurun Pinto. *Cha Tiger engañá / How Cha Tiger was tricked*, 20–27. 2018.

For the full source and list of readings for this session go to page 118.





Photo credit: Lea Novi









Photo credit: Lea Novi

Reading Methods

Check-in Question: *What is your favourite creature from folklore or mythology?*

Sharing Food

- Sharing a meal together can help to ground a text in flavours and textures, connect you to your fellow readers, and locate the reading and digestion process within the body.

ReThreading

This method is especially suitable for short stories.

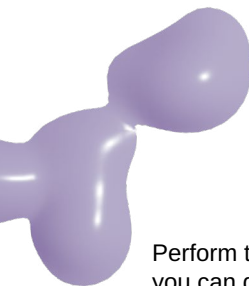
Through watching videos about the rich oral storytelling traditions of the Caribbean and West Africa, we observed how stories are passed on through rhythm and repetition, both to engage the listener and to make them easier to memorise. The stories are modified by the personal preferences and styles of each narrator, transforming as they travel through different bodies over the course of many years.

How to use this method:

- Make groups of 4-5 people. Every group chooses one story from a selection of stories.
- Read the story you chose or skim through it.
- Pick an element that you want to convey from the story together with your group. This could be the rhythm of the tale, a character that speaks to you, a prominent concept, or a joke.



Don't put too much effort into trying to memorise the entire story. Instead, embrace your subjectivity and welcome the modifications, additions, and inexactitudes that the fickleness of memory brings.



In your group, discuss how you want to convey the story. Do you want to collectively or individually narrate it, or work with rhythmical or musical elements? Try out different approaches for telling the story together. This is a good opportunity to challenge your comfort zone.

Perform the story to the other groups. Afterwards, you can discuss how you experienced this exercise and each other's performances.

My Feelings Are a Witness

On Poetry from Urgency and Solidarity



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With Yusser al Obaidi
and KIOSK Rotterdam

My Feelings Are a Witness

March 16th 2024, KIOSK Rotterdam

We gathered in the evening at KIOSK Rotterdam, a small bookshop that hosts radical theory, fiction, poetry, as well as self-publishing practices, and operates as a (riso) print workshop and leaky press. On the wall, a large banner said “No one is free until all of us are free” in bold letters in the colours of the Palestinian flag. Spread across small tables were zines printed on slightly transparent, roughly textured paper. The pages, filled with burgundy letters, contained poems written amidst the ongoing genocide in Gaza, testimonies of everyday life under the omnipresence of death.

Our collaborator for this session, Yusser al Obaidi, is a decolonial feminist writer and designer whose practice revolves around intimate forms of publishing and alternative forms of knowledge circulation. Her central concern is: how can we affirm other ways of being/known? Keeping in mind that in Arabic the word ‘shahid’ can be translated as both martyr and witness, Yusser invited us to reflect on ‘bearing witness’. How to resist being a passive consumer amidst the spectacle of violence that flickers across our screens? How to bear testimony to the voices coming out of Gaza as active agents writing their stories?



Together, we pondered what writing meant to us. As we took turns speaking, writing emerged as a way of giving voice to feeling. As a bridge between the personal and the political, between writer

and reader. As an act of trembling together, trembling to release.

We read poetry by Refaat Alareer, Hiba Abu Nada, Haya Abu Nasser, Ibrahim Nasrallah, and Mira Mattar. Our voices wove line after line, chiming in and out. Sometimes a line was carried by one voice, sometimes by twenty. Sometimes silence faded in, sometimes, with rising intensity, our voices took up speed. Gradually, we ourselves were braided into the fabric of poetry, where we held the sorrows of these poets distilled into words, collectively, tenderly. The fabric became a bridge. We crossed the bridge, and, on the other side, we wrote a letter to the witness/martyr within us, beginning with the words “Dear shahid, ...”.

Silence settled as bodies were intently bent over paper, making way for the rhythmic scratching of pens. In our writing, we gave words to the bridge we had built, conjuring the voice within us that is activated by the suffering of another, that urges towards justice. Towards the end, we sat in silence. We sat with the pain of the voices we had carried. We breathed with the power of solidarity. We felt with the urgency to bear witness.

“ that thing

that order you call your own

that takes each pulse of ocean & makes of it money

that takes each flicker of moon & makes of it money

that takes each hounding unmanned gun moored on the watch-
man's fence

that rotates its nothing head, sees one of us & shoots

I'll take each time you called us animals & fill

each lion's mouth on earth &

each cow's separate stomach &

each fly's million eyes &

each slug's glowing sex &

each fox's slowly blinking amber eye at dusk &

fill them with the names of the dead &

fill them with the names of the living &

every word in every language will sing their names

& the places their names grew out of ”

Mira Mattar. *1 Poem: 10 November 2023. 2024.*

For the full source and list of readings for this session go to page 119.

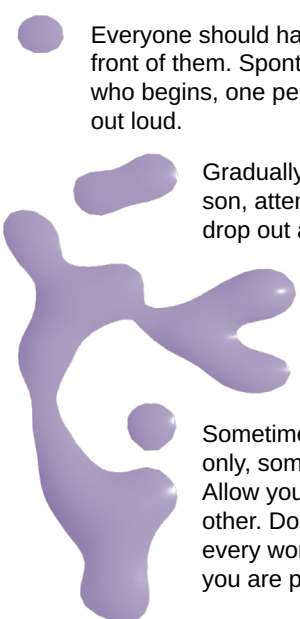
Reading Methods

Check-in Question: *What is your relationship to writing?*

Chiming-In

This method is especially suited for poetic writing that plays with rhythm, intensity, and the conjuring of emotions, allowing voices to float in and out of collective reading.

How to use this method:



Everyone should have a copy of a chosen poem in front of them. Spontaneously, without discussing who begins, one person starts reading the poem out loud.

Gradually, one or more people join in to read in unison, attempting to synchronise. Other voices might drop out and fall quiet.

Chime in when there is a word or passage that you would like to amplify, or when you hear a solitary voice reading in need of another.

Sometimes the text might be carried by one voice only, sometimes all voices might read collectively. Allow yourself to go in and out of sync with each other. Don't fret if you don't understand or absorb every word you read, focus on the collective voice you are part of.

This method was contributed by Reading Rhythms Club

Writing to the Shahid (Witness/Martyr) within You

In Arabic, the word shahid شهيد means both witness and martyr. This exercise is an invitation to reflect on what witnessing and martyrdom mean to you.

How to use this method:

For this method, you need paper and pens for letter writing and one larger piece of paper to create a collective composition.

Reflect on what the concepts of witnessing and martyrdom mean to you, at this very moment. Who is the witness/martyr within you? How would you address them? What do you want to tell them, or ask them? How do you give a voice to the witnessing you are taking part in?

Start your letter with the words 'Dear Shahid, ...'

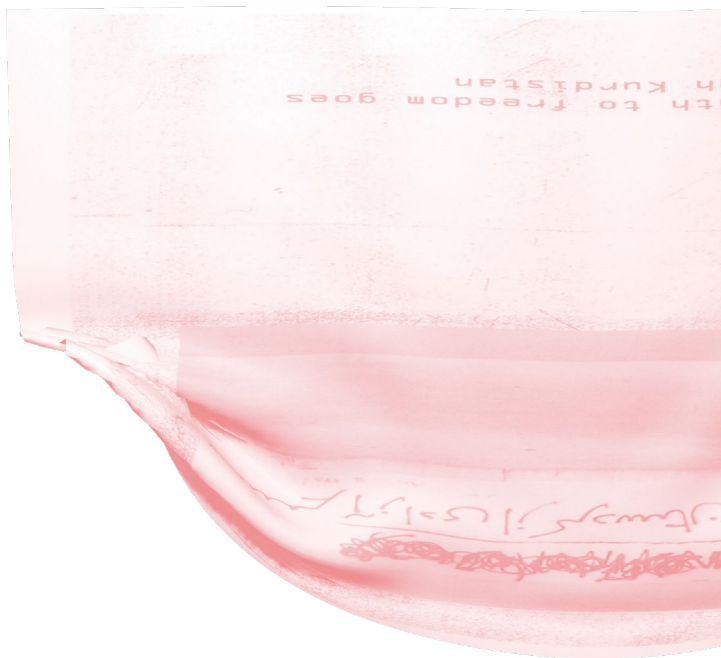
Once everyone has written their letter, a larger piece of paper will pass around and every participant is then invited to add one line of their letter to the collective piece, responding to what has previously been written.

After everyone has contributed to the collective poem, read it out loud and discuss it together.

This method was contributed by Yusser al Obaidi.

Solidarity Hums

On Protest and Intersections of Struggle





WORKNOT! (Golnar Abbasi
and Arvand Pourabbasi)

Solidarity Hums

May 18th 2024, WORKNOT! Studio

40

Solidarity Hums took place in WORKNOT!'s studio in Schieblok, a large block close to Rotterdam's central station that hosts studios and cultural spaces. Schieblok will partly be demolished to make space for luxury housing and offices soon. A table filled with fruits, snacks, and teas, surrounded by beautiful zines welcomed us. Resources on anti-imperialist resistance, colonialism, protest, and solidarity had been carefully assembled by our hosts Golnar Abbasi and Arvand Pourabbasi. Together, they form WORKNOT!, a collective focused on critical spatial practice and theory. Arvand is a spatial practitioner, researcher and educator focusing on decolonial readings of domesticity, public space, and spatial pedagogy; and Golnar is an architect-artist, researcher and publisher, focusing on politics of domesticity, anti-colonial space, and historical narrative.



We began by sharing our first memories of going to a protest. The stories spanned across generations and geographies, almost constructing a non-linear timeline of different protest movements and their intersections. Older generations took to the streets for the first time to protest against nuclear weapons. Slightly younger ones participated in the mass movements against the Iraq war and budget cuts in education. The youngest were mobilised to protest the rise of islamophobia in Europe and the climate crisis. There were also many memories from Iran's Green Revolution in 2009, of

student revolts and protesters chanting from rooftops.

Golnar and Arvand talked about the voice as a medium of solidarity. The voice amplifies demands through chanting collectively, turning into a human megaphone. It broadcasts statements and highlights links between struggles by drafting and signing letters. In the form of wall writings, it engraves solidarity on the body of the city. As the 'hum' emerges, the illegible voice outside of language, it carries chants sung in a language one does not speak. Taking turns, we read out the text in a slender, violet zine. Some parts, spelled in bold, were meant to be read together, like during a mic check. Our voices carried "One struggle, one fight, it is all connected", "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free", and "The people united will never be defeated". We wondered 'How to be in solidarity across distance?' and 'How to not succumb to apathy?'.

To close off, we wrote chants that felt meaningful to us on small pieces of canvas. We assembled anti-police chants in different languages, talking about the current police violence against the student intifada. Patiently, we waited for our turn to share the reds, blacks, and greens of the Palestinian flag and helped each other to bind our small banners to our publications.

“ Practicing solidarity doesn't have seasons; doesn't have time; doesn't have any preferential moment. The oppressed do not have time off; that solidarity with them would come with charts of days and dates. The notice of showing solidarity comes as a wind and goes as a wind, brings its own messages. We are the one standing in its way, to embrace it.

Once I asked a friend “how is it going?”. He was a mentor, a writer, a cafe owner, a ghahvechi (barista) [...] He answered “once they asked a Konâr tree (Sidr tree or Z. spina-christi tree) the very same question. The Konâr tree responded “well, there is a wind coming, and a wind going.”[...]

Konâr hummed with the wind, Konâr heard a lot from the wind, wind brought a lot of stories with her. Sometimes I feel like a Konâr in a flattest field ever, no protection, no blanket over stuff, naked, exposed, like an open wound. Konârs have heard from the river to the sea, the message of freedom of Palestine. From the river to the sea Palestine will be free.

Wounds that never get closed off. The wound that scratches itself open every time hearing free—edom. ”

WORKNOT! (Golnar Abbasi and Arvand Pourabbasi). *Solidarity Hums: On Protest and Intersections of Struggle*. 2024.

For the full source and list of readings for this session go to page 120.

Reading Methods

Check-in Question: *What is your first memory of going to a protest?*

Human Microphone

This method is especially suited for speeches, manifestos, or other forms of text that aim to bring forward a collective will.

The method is inspired by the 'Human Microphone', a way of amplifying a speaker's voice by collectively repeating an initial message further through many different throats. The 'Human Microphone' became popular during the Occupy Wall Street protests in 2011 but has been employed in a variety of contexts. At the time of the reading session, 'Mic Checks' were a common form of communication during protests and actions, facilitating the coordination of a group, its movement, and actions. Next to being a practical tool for making something audible in the absence of electronic devices, being part of a 'Human Microphone' creates a sense of collectivity, unity, and shared responsibility.

How to use this method:

You can highlight sentences you want to emphasise in the text beforehand; so they can be repeated collectively. Otherwise, the readers can decide when they want to do a 'Mic Check' on the spot.

The main text is read out loud by individual voices, paragraph by paragraph. There is no particular reading order and readers continue when they feel ready.

When encountering a highlighted part or a specific sentence the reader wants the collective to repeat, they say 'Mic Check' and read the original message out loud. Then, in unison, all the voices in the room repeat it. The reading continues.

This method was contributed by WORKNOT!

Library of Chants

Leading up to this event, we discussed how protest chants originate in different places, become translated, and travel across geographies. Sometimes as a way to express solidarity, sometimes because they are also applicable to other contexts. Since people from different areas of the world attend our events, we were curious to hear about the chants that are important to them and the stories behind them.

How to use this method:

- Prepare small pieces of fabric for making banners and markers suitable to write on the fabric with. Optionally, you can use hole punchers and rings to bind the banners to each other or to a reader at a later time.

Everyone should think of a chant that seems particularly urgent to them, that they have a special connection to, or that they would like to share with the group. Different languages are encouraged.

Write down your chant on a piece of cloth, creating a tiny banner. Feel free to get creative using different colours and make illustrations.

Afterwards, share your chants among the group to create a collection of chants together. You can also explain why you chose a particular chant and when you came across it for the first time.

This method was contributed by WORKNOT!
in conversation with Reading Rhythms Club.

You Come to Text Hungry for Connection: A Conversation on the Urgency of Collective Reading

with Yusser al Obaidi, Golnar Abbasi & Sofia Carnelli

Part 1

To open the conversation on the importance of reading up to some of our collaborators, friends, and fellow lovers of the written (and spoken) word, we invited Yusser al Obaidi, Golnar Abbasi, and Sofia Carnelli to join us on a cold evening at the end of March 2025 in the spacious kitchen of an old house close to the Schie canal where Julia lives.

About a year before, we had held the reading session 'My Feelings are a Witness' together with Yusser al Obaidi to discuss reading and writing as acts of witnessing. We were curious to hear from Yusser how, for her as both a decolonial, feminist writer and as a graphic designer, the textual and visual plane intersect and complement each other, especially in relation to her interest in intimate forms of publishing.

With Golnar Abbasi we had previously read and talked about chants and hums as texts of solidarity that emerge in the streets and travel across geographies during our event 'Solidarity Hums'. From her, we wanted to learn more about the role reading plays in (creative) education since she is a teacher at the Piet Zwart Institute and the Willem de Kooning Academie in Rotterdam. We were also wondering how she approaches text in her practice as a publisher.

We had met Sofia Carnelli during one of our reading sessions and later went on to organise the event 'A Seat at the Table' with her and Katayun Taraporevala at Queer Rotterdam, where we discussed the role of food in queer community building through an experimental reading menu. We were curious to talk about her relationship to reading, especially as Sofia doesn't primarily work in the cultural field. She is an engineer, has a great love for reading and organises a book club as part of Queer Rotterdam, a volunteer-based organisation who facilitate events for the queer community.

Julia

To start off, it would be really nice to hear from all of you about the place that reading holds in your practices. It's an assumption maybe, but I think that you all consider reading important to some extent. Maybe you can say a little bit about why you think it's important and how it relates to what you do.

Sofia

Shall I start? Okay, well, reading doesn't have a big space within Queer Rotterdam. We do a lot of things, organising support groups and events, but last year we wanted to host a book club, and at first it was basically not going to happen, but when I finally had the opportunity, I decided to pick it up, because I felt like it was a good way to get people together and talk.

Yusser

For me, I think that in reading or writing people can express a lot of meaning that is hard to express when just speaking. It forces you to reflect and slow down and it involves a different kind of engagement with the world. And that's why I would say that reading is very important. But reading also in all forms can be very hard. Sometimes it feels like reading a book is something that you really have to overcome. You know, like a hurdle, but then you don't realise how much you actually already read each day just by being on your phone. There's a lot of things that you're reading constantly. I think that's also important to realise, that writing is all around us, that it's not just in books.

Julia

I like what you say about reading as slowing down and I feel like sometimes that makes it especially hard. We're constantly in this mode of getting things done, and reading is not about getting things done. You have to get into a different mind space. And sometimes that's really hard because it doesn't give you the instant gratification of having ticked another box on your to-do list.

Golnar

I have to read a lot for teaching, because I teach around different texts. I think in general there's a lot of reading

in my practice, also in my collective work, because we sometimes self-publish books.

Something I was thinking about when coming here, which is not really related to my practice, or maybe it is, is reading when you are going through a big life change or when the world around you is changing dramatically. And people recommend you books, or you look for things to read so you can make sense of what's going on. And then some of these books you don't like and some of them are more complex and some of them are more personal. I often find myself chatting with friends, and I'm like "Oh, there is this thing I read, I thought you might like it because of what you're going through, or because of this conversation that we had about the genocide in Palestine."

Yusser Making sense of what's going on around you. I think that's also a big reason to read for me. And to recommend readings and work with books.

Julia Sometimes I approach books almost like medicine. You're around somebody in some sort of emotional peril and you recommend a book in the hope that maybe it will do something to the chemistry of their mind and body that will ease their suffering. Reading helps to understand the context of certain things and it can offer you tools to deal with situations.

Do you think reading eases suffering?

Sofia I was reading a book that's about relationships, it's called "Radical Intimacy" by Sophie K Rosa, and one chapter talks about seeing death in a different way. I think it's very relevant to not be scared of death and have more collective approaches towards it. Because it's something that everyone faces alone. So yeah, I think it can be healing to be offered different ways of looking at things.

Yusser I think you arrive at a text hungry for some kind of transformation. Not just theory, but also fiction. Like you want to be changed by something that you read. So then, in that sense, you are looking for something that can shift your mindset or help you to make sense of things around you that are not adding up.

But it also shows you that someone else has thought about this. There's also experiences you go through and for you it's the first time, but there are so many books that people have written about that topic.

But there's also something that relates to what Yusser said before. I have found myself on Reddit a lot recently, looking for information to understand other people's experiences with pregnancy, birth, and parenthood, which is something that I am experiencing. I have no idea what to make of it because many of these topics, especially pregnancy, are so absent from the popular imaginary. Or, there are very stereotypical ideas of it. But what is it actually? And then I find a lot of people who write about their own experience, what just happened to them last month. And they feel the urge to share it so it can help others or they just want it to be out there so they don't forget it.

Yusser

The community of reading. I mean, when you're on reddit you're also reading and writing together. But in a way that you maybe wouldn't consider reading or writing when you think about a publication or when you think about artistic work.

Senka

When you were introducing reading in your practice, Golnar, I was going to ask if you see reading as a way of connecting. Also in publishing, you are connecting strings of thought, ideas, people, different notions. So they can speak to each other and to others searching for that connection.

Golnar

That's a really big part of how I understand it. Also, making sense of or coming to terms with something. For me, a lot of it is also about listening. Reading is like you're listening to someone else talking about how they make sense of things.

Julia

It's like listening to somebody else's monologue. But consensually.

Yusser

I don't know if I would see it as a monologue because, I was thinking, it's also a way of not feeling alone.

Golnar Mm-hmm.

Yusser A text is full of references, usually, so even if it's a monologue it's consisting of a lot of different voices or a lot of different information that the writer weaves together. I also really relate to what you were saying, Golnar, about reading as connecting. The importance of reading really came to me when I was growing up, when nothing made sense. When you're struggling and you think it's just you struggling. And then you read about...patriarchy existing? As a teenager, I was like, "wow, a French philosopher is talking about feminism!"

Senka Maybe this is a good segueway to ask you, when did you turn towards reading?

Golnar I think I always read. I was obsessed with magazines when I was a child. Children's magazines with illustrations and short stories and poetry for children. In Iran, at the time, there were maybe five different magazines for children, and I would force my parents to buy me one. But maybe more academically when I was in my master's, I realised that I don't have to just accept disciplinary, professional knowledge and the stuff that the professors tell us as the only history. And that I can read myself, and make sense of things. And then I had great teachers that forced us to read theory, and I realised I can make sense of my own experiences and the stuff that I don't like through it.

Sofia I started reading fantasy books when I was very young. I was lucky because the lady in the library gave me books that were way above my age. So I read a lot when I was a child, as a way to escape from reality. It's a good coping mechanism. Then, when I got my first book in English, I realised I can read and also improve my English. I started to link reading to improving myself which screwed up my relationship with reading a bit because I could not read anymore just for the fun of it. And it's something that I struggle with still a lot, every time I try to find books that enrich me.

[A deep hum starts filling the room.]

Yusser What's this sound?

Golnar I think it's a ship.

Yusser The windows are vibrating! Does this happen?

Julia Yes haha. The house is vibrating with the rhythm of the city.

Sofia It's possessed! It's possessed by the ships!

We took the occasion of the boat passing through the murky waters of the close-by canal, which turned the window panes into trembling instruments, to prepare a new pot of tea.

The conversation continues on page 78.

Block 2:

June–September 2024

Behind shiny surfaces, plunged into obscurity, invisible networks dictate the flow of cash, attention, and goods. Deceivingly abstract and immaterial, this murky dance of numbers carves out the matter of life. Meanwhile, in the soils of solidarity, grassroots initiatives are challenging destructive infrastructures by building alternative webs to meet community needs.

Our second reading block, Shadowy Infrastructures, dove into the obscure infrastructures of power and money that govern everyday life, that undermine people's rights to adequate housing, and that shape the conditions for life on earth. At the same time, we talked about strategies of collective refusal: alternative, bottom-up infrastructures of mutual aid, and the questions that arise with this practice.

Shadowy Infra- structures

Wreathing Geofinance

On Financial Capitalism
and Climate Change





With Sami Hammana

Wreading Geofinance

June 28th 2024, Elevatorhuis

The lush garden of the Elevatorhuis, built in 1917 by the Graan Elevator Maatschappij, served as the setting for *Wreading Geofinance*. Located in the former harbour of Rotterdam, we were surrounded by the opulent houses lining Parklaan, mostly built in the late 19th century as the offices of merchants and bankers who shaped the face of financial capitalism and exported it around the world.

Our collaborator for this session, Sami Hammana, is an artist and educator whose work is primarily concerned with the limits of perception and practices of collective study. Together, we went for a walk in the neighbourhood, passing the former office of World Online, the protagonist of the Dutch internet investment bubble scam in 2000 and the headquarters of VOPAC, a multinational company focused on the storage of oil and chemicals, which can be traced back to the early 17th century, when it stored colonial loot for the VOC (Dutch East India Company). As we later learned, the VOC invented speculative finance to fund their ships.



Back in the garden, we read excerpts on the global system of profit accumulation, whose financial power exceeds those of

nation states. As the character Jensen in Sidney Lumet's 1976 film "The Network" says: "There is only one holistic system of systems, one vast and immane, interwoven, interacting, multi-variate, multi-national dominion of dollars!" Through snippets from "The Ontology of Finance" by Suhail Malik, we tried to decipher the consciously obscure vocabulary of finance. And that sometimes the smooth, seemingly immaterial working of finance fails, and the very material reality underlying it comes to the fore, as we learned from an interview with futures trader Bob Lassandrello, who failed to sell a contract before its expiration date and got 40 cows delivered to his office.

A lot of time was dedicated to clarifying terms, meaning we could barely scratch the surface of the enigmatic system that has a profound impact on our lives, shaping prices of rents and goods, and accelerating the speed of climate breakdown. When we discussed the terms "bearish" and "bullish" in relation to markets, a participant pointed out that a copy of the Wall Street Bull sculpture, personifying a wild, untamed market, is located in Rotterdam, on a private property just across the street, where we concluded the session.

“ While the official sanction for the growth of finance markets is framed in terms of risk-management and the provision of liquidity to all markets, what the crisis itself made palpable was that it is financial markets themselves that impose the systemic entrenchment and expansion of uncontained financial risk—contagion, as it is called—and in the service of that systemic requirement the reduction of liquidity within those markets in the 2008 crisis required significant intervention by state agencies in order to maintain their general economic functioning. For example, Euro-American state support for banks in the year 2008-9 alone amounted to \$14tn (about 25 percent of global GDP). Furthermore, these quantitative factors have a categorical corollary: whereas sovereign monarchs presented the greatest threat to banks in the early capitalist banking system (that of defaulting on war loans), ‘today, perhaps the biggest risk to the sovereign comes from the banks. Causality has reversed’. States are now subject to the distinct power of finance in a way they are to no other terrestrial entity (apart from other states, and climate change). ”

Suhail Malik. *The Ontology of Finance: Price, Power, and the Arkhéderivative*, 635–636. 2014.

For the full source and list of readings for this session go to page 120.

Check-in Question: *What is your favourite number and why?*

Reading the Neighbourhood

Since the neighbourhood where we held this reading session had many historical ties to capitalism, colonial trade, and finance, we wanted to begin the session by 'reading' the environment through a facilitated walk. This way, we anchored the seemingly abstract topic of finance in our concrete, immediate environment. Of great help in this case was our host Maurits, who knew a lot about the history of the neighbourhood and gave us tips to construct the tour. Of course, this method can also be applied to other topics and neighbourhoods.

Preparation:

Delineate a rough area for your walk. Do research on the neighbourhood and how its past and present relate to the topic you want to focus on. It can be useful to talk to locals or local organisations that have (historical) knowledge on the area. You might also consider looking through archives, if available.

Based on this research, walk around the neighbourhood. Have a look at the places that you found interesting information on. Think about how to create a narrative through a route connecting the different localities. When walking around, be flexible and open, since you might discover unexpected things that you can include in your walk.

Create a map for participants that depicts the route, important stops, and short texts with information on the relevant places.

How to use this method:

After a short introduction, hand out the maps and embark on the route. At each stop, people can take turns reading out the information. Encourage people to discuss and share additional details and thoughts.

While walking, observe your surroundings. Look around and listen. What can you see? Are there a lot of security cameras?

What do the signs on the buildings say? Can you hear particular noises, music, or crowds of people? Is it eerily silent?

Discuss your observations. How does power, wealth, and capitalist propaganda shape the face of an environment? What stories do the facades of the houses tell you? What histories do their stones carry?

Beware that groups on facilitated walks tend to cluster and spread out. Some people might want to go to the toilet, others discover details that they want to linger with. Make sure to calculate enough time.

This method was contributed by Reading Rhythms Club.

Slow Reading & Indexing

This method is especially suited for difficult texts that contain obscure, jargony, or unfamiliar vocabulary.

How to use this method:

Somebody starts reading the first paragraph, while everyone underlines words that they don't understand. Pause after the paragraph to discuss everyone's unfamiliar terms. Try to figure out their meaning in this context as a group before reaching for your phones to look them up online. You can create a small glossary of terms in the margins of your text or in a notebook.

After clarifying the terms, read the paragraph again to see if it's more comprehensible or if new meanings emerged. Make space for additional questions and allow for different forms of knowledge, such as referencing memes and personal recollections.

Continue this way with each paragraph.

This method was contributed by Sami Hammana in conversation with Reading Rhythms Club.

How Many Friends Does It Take to Build a Frame?

On Mutual Aid in Practice





With Doe-Het-Zelf
Werkplaats

How Many Friends Does it Take to Build a Frame?

July 19th 2024, Doe-Het-Zelf Werkplaats

We came together on one of those stuffy summer evenings in mid-July, when things seem to move just a bit slower than usual. A surprisingly large group of people squeezed between the wheels, tubes, and tools in the small, self-built space of the Doe-Het-Zelf Werkplaats (DHZ), made of wooden frames stuck together to resemble a greenhouse, attached to a light-blue shipping container.

DHZ is a mutual aid space for people who want to fix their bikes or work on other hands-on projects. In the small strip next to a public park, volunteers share tools and knowledge. Mutual learning is key and nobody is considered an expert. For the occasion of our reading group, members of DHZ contributed texts that related to their understanding of mutual aid into a collective reader. This resulted in an eclectic mix of individual voices, including contributions on grassroots organising, ecological thought, anarchist science fiction, trans liberation, and much more.



Assembling the reader also gave the volunteers a better understanding of how the space related to their wider urgencies and interests. The texts were interspersed with pink paper wherein each volunteer shared their thoughts on the space and why they choose

to contribute the text. When reading the pink pages together, we were surprised by the variety of voices. Some people were interested in experimenting with alternative forms of social organising, others in degrowth, and again others had a passion for fixing bikes. After reading the reflections of the volunteers, everybody took their time to meander through the reader silently and choose an excerpt to share with the group.

We read a snippet from Dean Spade's "Mutual Aid" together, which made the challenges of organising mutual aid infrastructures explicit, especially in terms of group dynamics. We talked a lot about scarcity: the artificially constructed scarcity mindset that fuels competition, but also the very real scarcity of 'capacity' in organising groups. This led to a conversation about the lack of public spaces in Rotterdam, and the importance of having environments where people can spend time and build community without spending money. When the sun began to set, participants scattered to spray paint the zine with a stencil, fix their bikes, or linger in conversation.

“ Mutual aid is essential to building social movements. People often come to social movement groups because they need something: eviction defense, childcare, social connection, health care, or help in a fight with the government about something like welfare benefits, disability services, immigration status, or custody of their children. Being able to get help in a crisis is often a condition for being politically active, because it's very difficult to organize when you are also struggling to survive. Getting support through a mutual aid project that has a political analysis of the conditions that produced your crisis also helps to break stigma, shame, and isolation. Under capitalism, social problems resulting from exploitation and the maldistribution of resources are understood as individual moral failings, not systemic problems. Getting support at a place that sees the systems, not the people suffering in them, as the problem can help people move from shame to anger and defiance. Mutual aid exposes the failures of the current system and shows an alternative. This work is based in a belief that those on the front lines of a crisis have the best wisdom to solve the problems, and that collective action is the way forward. ”

Dean Spade. *Three Key Elements of Mutual Aid*, 9. 2020.

For the full source and list of readings for this session go to page 121.

Reading Methods

Check-in Question: *What is your default role in collaborations?*

Foraging for Quotes

This method is suitable for collections of text or could also be used to engage with libraries or book collections.

For this reading session, Doe-Het-Zelf Werkplaats volunteers assembled a reader comprising many different texts they found relevant in relation to their work at DHZ. To engage with the reader, we wanted to allow participants to freely decide which texts attracted their curiosity most and what they wanted to read within the zine.

How to use this method:

After an introduction to the overarching topic of the session, each participant has about 25 minutes to skim through the reader at their own pace and decide which text attracts their interest most. People can read whatever sparks their curiosity and are tasked with 'foraging' for one quote that especially resonates with them and that they would like to bring to the group.

Afterwards, everyone shares their quote, why they chose it, and any other reflections they had during their stroll through the reader. This usually branches off into wider conversations.

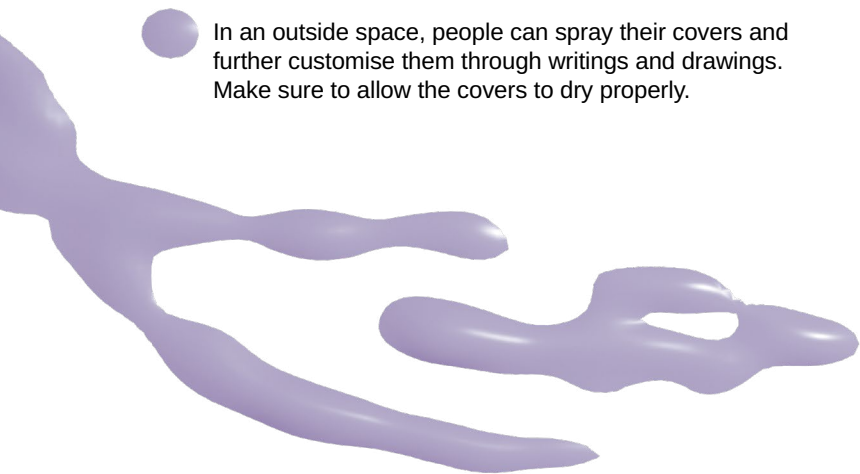
This method was contributed by the Doe-Het-Zelf Werkplaats in conversation with Reading Rhythms Club.



Customised Cover

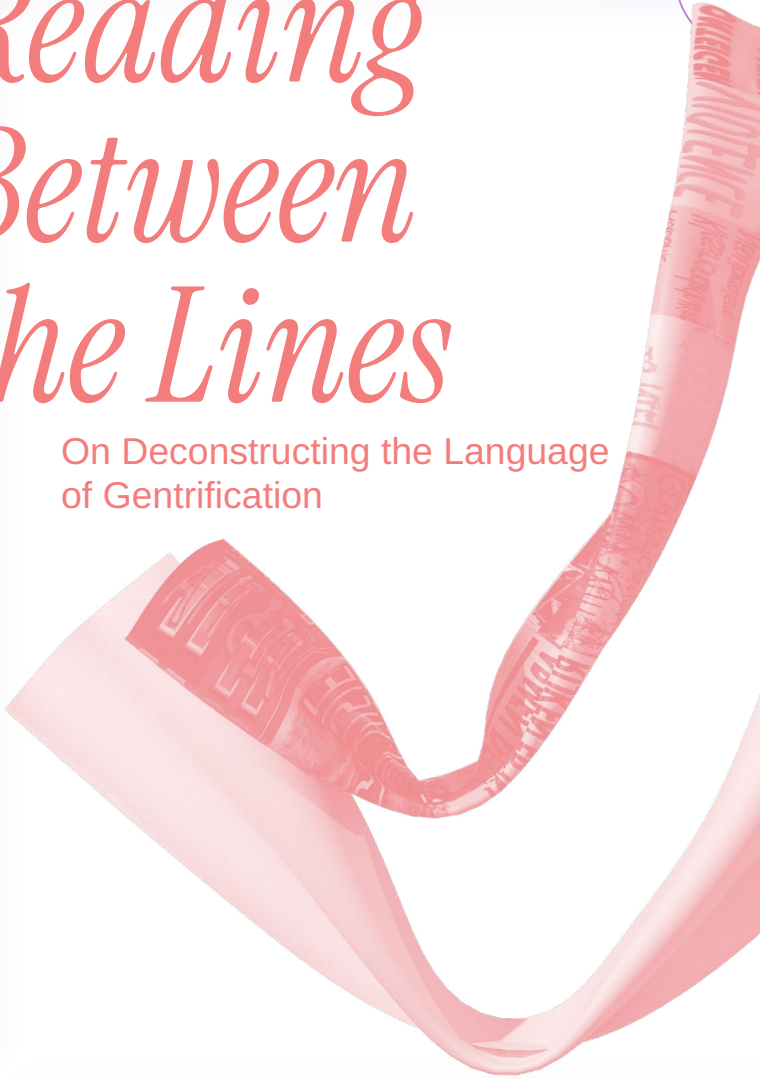
● Prepare a simple cardboard stencil of the title of the reader or of the cover image, as well as spray cans (possibly in different colours).

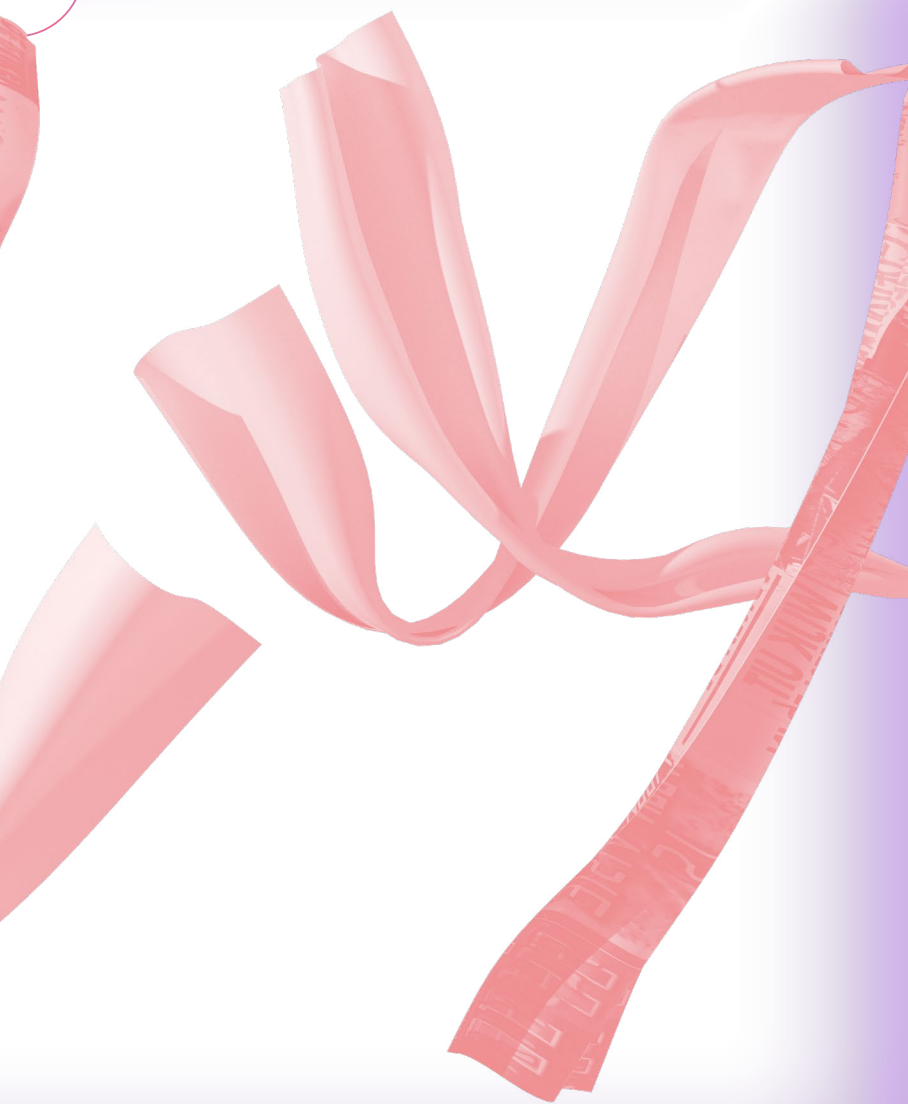
● In an outside space, people can spray their covers and further customise them through writings and drawings. Make sure to allow the covers to dry properly.



Reading Between the Lines

On Deconstructing the Language
of Gentrification





With Cultural Workers Unite

Reading Between the Lines

September 14th 2024, Catu Squat

66

Passing through a metal gate in the Lombardijen neighbourhood of Rotterdam South, surrounded by dense greenery, into the courtyard of what had once been a school, we entered what is now Catu, a home to squatters, workshops, and community spaces. In the anarchist library, the squatters told us how they resisted eviction from the police.

We spoke about signs of gentrification in our localities: shops disappearing, art spaces popping up, large-scale demolition, English language floating through the streets. And more place-specific examples, like the removal of stray dogs in Belgrade, the appearance of photo booths in Seoul, and Dutch people buying houses in Curaçao.

Lila from Cultural Workers Unite – a group that uses cultural strategies for anticapitalist solidarities and the initiator of the grassroots curriculum Anti-Gentrification School – distributed pink zines with excerpts from Leslie Kern's "Gentrification is Inevitable and Other Lies" as well as texts about development projects and policy programs in Rotterdam. Leslie Kern describes how through metaphors gentrification is portrayed as an inevitable and natural process, painting resistance as futile, taking responsibility and agency away from people. Additionally, colonial language is often used by evoking the perceived need for 'civilisation' and speaking of 'empty land' and 'urban jungles'.

After reading the text, we went through articles, project plans, and policy documents in smaller groups. We intervened in the texts to make the underlying intentions, which are often obscured through metaphor, legible. For example, Marco Pastors, the head of the policy program Nationaal Programma Rotterdam Zuid (NPRZ), describes himself as a 'farmer' who needs to 'take out the bad weeds and sow the good tomatoes'. Or that the municipality promotes 'social mixing': a euphemism for getting high-income groups to gentrify low-income neighbourhoods.

We spoke about how groups are played out against each other through unequal distribution of privileges, often among racial lines, which makes them easier to oppress. The conversation lingered around our everyday struggles with housing and the urgency to build infrastructures that offer legal, emotional, and financial support to resist exploitative renting practices and displacement collectively.

“ Gentrification writers have regularly utilized the discourse of colonization. Jim Stratton’s 1977 book *Pioneering in the Urban Wilderness* is a notable example. Writing about the trend toward reclaiming factory spaces for loft living, Stratton describes “urban pioneers” moving into “the dilapidated and under-used spaces of America’s urban disaster areas.” Terms like settler, settled, urban jungle, frontier, occupation, tamed, and wild are staples of gentrification writing.

Critics of this language, like geographer Neil Smith, note that it positions the working class in much the same way as Indigenous people were positioned in art and literature: as a natural element of their physical surroundings, rather than as part of the social world. Ironically, however, this particular critique appears in his book called *The New Urban Frontier*. Smith misses the opportunity to acknowledge that this representation of Indigenous peoples is not merely historical, and to acknowledge that gentrification is a continuation of colonization in many cities today.

In response to activist declarations that “gentrification is the new colonialism,” Indigenous people have responded that there is no “new colonialism” because the “old colonialism” is not over. ”

Leslie Kern. *Gentrification is Natural*. 2022.

For the full source and list of readings for this session go to page 123.





Photo credit: Lea Novi





Photo credit: Lea Novi





Photo credit: Lea Novi

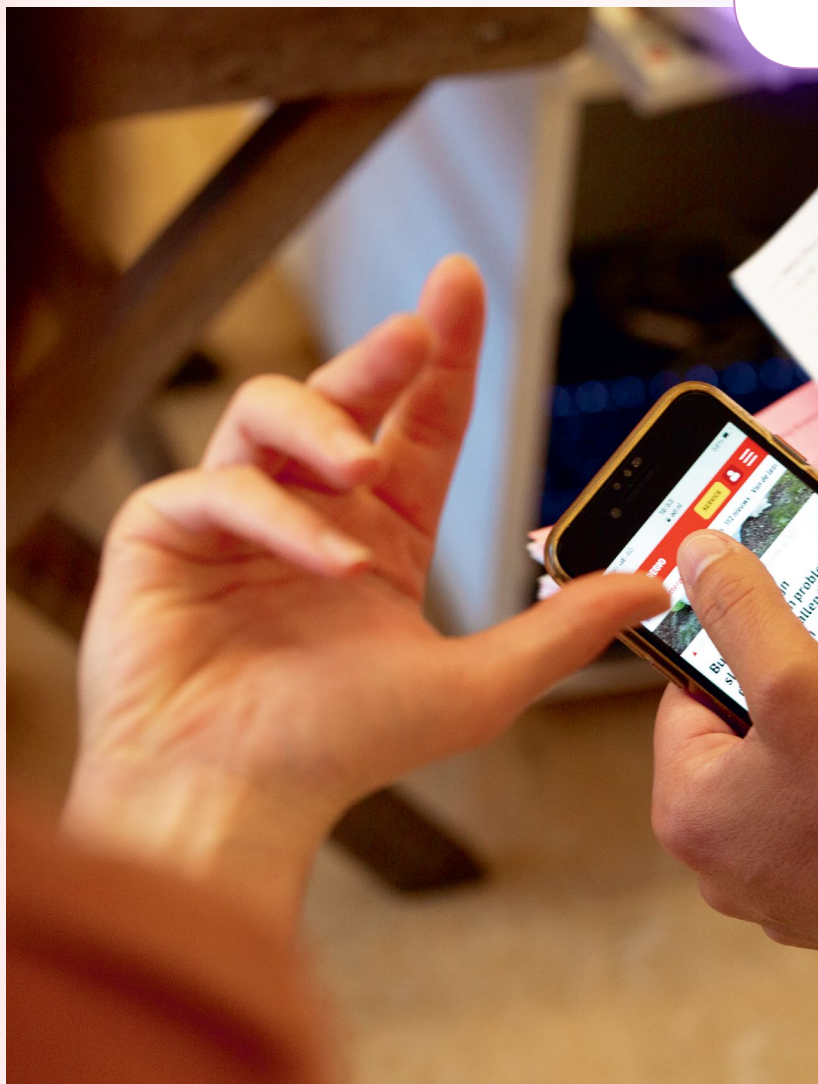




Photo credit: Lea Novi

Reading Methods

Check-in Question: *What is a sign of gentrification you can observe in your street or neighbourhood?*

Reading Between the Lines

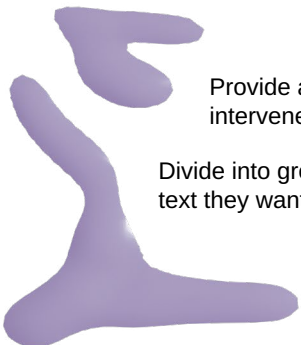
This method is especially suitable for texts that are obscuring their true intentions and must be read through a critical lens. It helps to unmask the strategies and workings of propaganda.

During this session, we read excerpts of Leslie Kern's 'Gentrification is Inevitable and Other Lies' to understand what kind of metaphors or rhetorical tricks are used to mask gentrification or represent it as a benevolent process. With this knowledge, we 'read between the lines' of policy documents, development plans, articles, and interviews with politicians.

How to use this method:

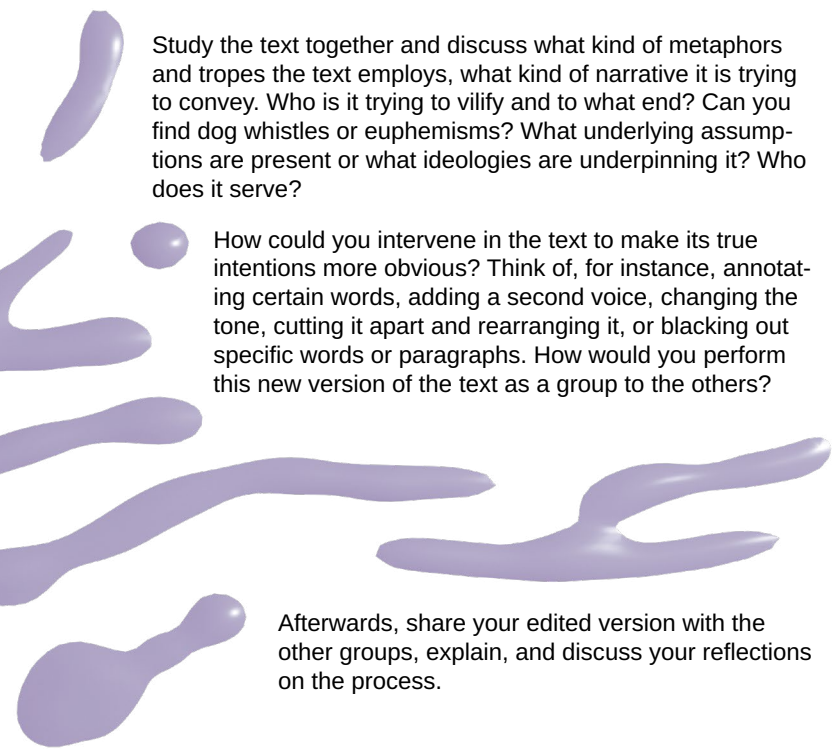


Start by giving an introduction on common euphemisms, metaphors, and dog whistles, as well as other relevant background knowledge on the topic in question. This can also be in the form of reading a critical text and discussing it with the group.



Provide a few texts that you want participants to intervene in.

Divide into groups of 2-5 people. Each group chooses a text they want to focus on.

Several thick, expressive purple brushstrokes are scattered across the page. Some are small dots or short strokes, while others are long, flowing lines that meander across the middle section. One prominent stroke starts on the left and extends towards the right, with a smaller stroke branching off it.

Study the text together and discuss what kind of metaphors and tropes the text employs, what kind of narrative it is trying to convey. Who is it trying to vilify and to what end? Can you find dog whistles or euphemisms? What underlying assumptions are present or what ideologies are underpinning it? Who does it serve?

How could you intervene in the text to make its true intentions more obvious? Think of, for instance, annotating certain words, adding a second voice, changing the tone, cutting it apart and rearranging it, or blacking out specific words or paragraphs. How would you perform this new version of the text as a group to the others?

Afterwards, share your edited version with the other groups, explain, and discuss your reflections on the process.

You Come to Text Hungry for Connection: A Conversation on the Urgency of Collective Reading

with Yusser al Obaidi, Golnar Abbasi & Sofia Carnelli

Part 2

Julia We already talked about how it's nonsense that reading is this isolated, lonely activity, because in a way we are already communing with other people's voices through text. But I'm also curious about your experiences with collective reading, especially earlier on in life.

Sofia When I was in high school we had a very nice teacher who taught us Dante's 'Inferno' and 'The Divine Comedy'. She was very left-wing, politically. We had this reading class and she didn't care too much what people did. So some people were minding their own business and a few students gathered in a circle around her and read this book together that you wouldn't expect to engage teenagers so much. But everyone was so engaged! That was my first experience where people were reading together and discussing a text, which is not very common in school.

Julia Nice. Maybe that's also a good connection, because we wanted to ask you, Golnar, specifically about the role of reading in education. Why do you think it's important that students read and also how do they respond to reading? In my experience in art education, reading and theory isn't really considered very important most of the time.

Golnar There is definitely a resistance to reading, and I don't think that this is only in the Netherlands, especially within education in creative fields. I think on the bachelor level, there is a perception of reading as part of formal, academic education, which isn't really considered necessary within arts education because of the assumption that people have to develop other skills, and reading is a waste of time. Maybe there is also an allergy to a kind of snobbishness that comes with being a theory person, or a well-read person. In my experience, as a designer there is the idea that you read the history of your discipline, or you read theory, but only one author, and then you're good to

go. So I don't think it's really seen structurally as part of the skills that artists and designers should develop.

At the same time, I think the classroom is really a space where all these things can grow in young people. I was myself exposed to reading because people forced me to read what was difficult for me at that time. And then I was like, "oh I actually get it, and I like it, and it helps me. I like this stuff more than the other dudes I was asked to read!" So I think it's quite empowering. It also helps to expose people to theory, and the classroom is a really privileged space to cultivate these things.

Yusser

You're saying that people are allergic to theory or allergic to certain texts, but I think it's also about confrontation. It's also the type of theory that you're talking about that is very confronting, especially when it's something that you're not aware of at all. My therapist always says that most people are just shoving things away. It's hard to feel things and most people don't. It's hard to confront things. Reading and getting to know other perspectives is a very big confrontational part of looking for meaning and engaging with the world in a serious manner that steps away from the values that we are told we must chase. And it means stepping out of this path that is kind of set in stone for us, and in that sense it's also queer, or like, it's about queering, and that's really scary and confronting for a lot of people. And, of course, a lot of people choose an education that is focused on very practical things, the goal of that education is not to blow their minds. And I think it can be very confronting for that to be interjected by this scary professor who's like: "Read this text." That's part of the big confronting things of life, once you start asking questions. And there's an outwards confrontation, and there's, I think, also an inwards confrontation, which is maybe also done through writing?

Golnar

I think that's exactly why I feel committed to education, if there is any commitment to be had. Especially when students are a bit older and the people in the room have a bit more life experience, it really has to be this honest space and it's very confrontational. Because sometimes people in the class are implicated in these histories of violence that we're reading about. It's really difficult to sit

with that and then especially be honest with it around the table, talking to other people who arrive at the table from different places or different relations to those histories. And it's true, it's really confrontational. And I think it's the same thing with writing. Teaching writing is super emotional. I don't know how many times people cry while writing their theses because they're trying to honestly put on paper what they really think. It's a deep experience.

Julia

It also makes me think about one of the texts that we read during our last Reading Rhythms session, 'You've Been Traumatized Into Hating Reading And It Makes You Easier To Oppress' by Ismatu Gwendolyn. She writes about how we're supposed to hate reading because it keeps us from understanding how the world is actually made, from having this analytical tool, but also from realising that things around us are made up and that we can also make things up. It's not only that people just don't want to be confrontational, but we are also supposed to not want to confront.

Yusser

I love what you're saying, about making things up. It's about creation. And it also relates, I think, to the reading of fiction and fantasy.

Sofia

Like Ursula K Le Guin who writes fiction to show how the world could be, like in 'The Dispossessed' for example.

Yusser

But also, I think the role of theory is exposing the fiction of the world, right? Like there's just so much fiction in the world of how things are supposed to run. Like the fiction of capitalism and the fiction of gender, the fiction of power.

Senka

And then vice versa, there's also theory embedded in fiction! Speaking about the way that books influence how we perceive the world, is there a specific book or a text that profoundly shaped you as a person?

Yusser

The text by bell hooks called 'Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness'. It has profoundly shaped the way I view the world.

Julia
Yusser

Can you explain a little bit?

Yeah um I mean at this point it's so embedded in me that I don't...

Senka
Yusser

...you don't know where the text ends and you begin.

Haha, exactly! Where is the text, where is me? Where is the text also speaking through me? You know like where has the text kind of taken over my body as a spirit that is possessing me? No, I'm kidding, haha.

What that text did for me, or, at least how I see it right now, is that it talks about language as a space. A space that is not separate from power structures, a space that you can actively choose, also depending on which language you use. I think what spoke to me is this idea of the spatiality of text but also this spatial element of power in general. The text talks about how bell hooks is coming from the margin but works in the center. And it's also talking in quite an active voice about taking the margin with you to the center and what that means and how you do that. How do you not let the center be your center? And the center in this case is about academia and white institutions. As a Black American woman, from a place where they speak a completely different English.

A big part of what was very mind-blowing for me is also about the knowledge and creativity that there is in the margin, that there must be the margin, because creativity is also a way of survival. You need to be creative to survive, so actually she is repositioning the margin as the most creative space, as a space of intellectuality. The place that is the most suffocated by material conditions is also the place of the most resistance, and of the most creativity, and of reshaping life collectively. That's what the text did for me. And then obviously, reading it while studying in two very white institutions, an art academy and a university, that both have this false promise of intellectuality and creation is also, I don't know, like a big "fuck you"...

Sofia

I'm... indecisive between two texts. The one that radicalised me is 'Mutual Aid' by Dean Spade. It's a book on mutual aid which gives you a different perspective on

what community can be and how people can help each other in a different way. It's not about doing charity but about actually coming together and from the common struggles connecting and working together to make things better. It's a very small book, so I always recommend it to everyone.

Another book that affected me a lot is 'Relationship Anarchy: Occupy Intimacy,' because it gave me the ideas and tools to navigate relationships. Both being queer and living in times where there is so much focus on the nuclear family and community is deemed less important is very difficult. It's actually a book that I come back to sometimes, because I need some suggestions for how to see things and I probably shifted a lot of the relationships that I have now because it gave me a different point of view. It helped me to make sense of things outside of the normative way of seeing relationships.

Golnar

For me, the book that I keep coming back to is 'How to Disappear' by Haytham El-Wardany. It has small chapters called 'how to disappear', 'how to reappear', 'how to join a group', 'how to leave a group', 'how to listen to your inner voice', and so on. It's one of the books published by Kayfa Ta publishing initiative who publish manual-like books. A friend gave it to me, a very interesting person who is really into poetry. At the time that she gave me this book, I didn't know Kayfa Ta and I didn't know the author. I stuck with the book for many years. Since it was from a friend, I kept it and kept going back to it and I think through time it has come to mean many different things.

So, when Haytham El-Wardany talks about, for example, 'how to disappear', you are instructed to engage or disengage with sounds around you, like the sound of a vacuum cleaner or the sounds of a car on the street and other everyday stuff. And I think there was something really fascinating about this element of always tuning in and out for me. And then, later, I understood that the book was written in the aftermath of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011. It was written in the context of a failed revolution and its counter-revolution, when people were facing a lot of censorship and state oppression and were struggling to make sense of what

was happening. How to be in spaces where you disagree? Where there's surveillance everywhere? Where the change that's been instigated has been silenced to an extent that you don't even feel entitled or safe to embody it? And in that context you think about hearing and being without speaking. And you think about sound. What are the sounds of the middle class? Who gets to speak? Who gets to actually occupy the space of sound? How do you make sense of that?

I think this has been one of the books that I keep going back to because it's very affective. It's like a weird series of exercises, not really theory, not really fiction. There's something about this author who wants to say something without explicitly saying it that has been really powerful and that shaped me and my writing practice.

Yusser Is it one of the first more playful pieces of text you read which are engaging with theory?

Golnar I think so. I think before this I was really into... hardcore, critical, antagonistic theory. Like, 'fuck architecture, fuck gender!' I remember I was really into Paul B. Preciado. He had a small essay about gender and architecture and it ended with something like, 'architecture is a dildo and it's in us.' That was the kind of text that I appreciated and found life-changing. And then, with 'How To Disappear', I didn't really know what to do with it.

Yusser I really like that because it's also about this trajectory of going from texts that are critiques to something that is more creative, or an actual...embodiment of something different, which a critique is not. Critiques are important, but the text itself is not embodying something different.

Julia Yes, and maybe that's also related to the voice of the book, because when the book enacts what it describes, then the voice and the content are moving as one. There is an affective layer as well.

Yusser Voice is part of it, but I think it's about the whole structure or the whole performance of the text. If you see text as an art form, then there are all these different performances that the text can do. It can be the tone, it can also be the visual performance of the text, it could also

be the structure, or in this case of 'How To Disappear' there are these different exercises.

Julia

For sure, the visual plane also strongly impacts how one reads. Something else we were thinking about in preparation for this conversation is how to understand reading as an activity. Is reading just about text? Or can you read other things than text, and if yes, what does that imply? What kind of intention are you bringing when you're reading something?

Senka

For me, reading is definitely not just about text. You're constantly reading. You're reading people's emotions off of their faces. In a queer sense, you're 'doing a reading', meaning analysing someone, reading their facade. There are a lot of acts of engaging with the world that I would call reading, as a way of making sense. Also, in making sense, there's an experiential part, which goes through your body, through your brain, through your nervous system.

Julia

I think there's also an element of slowing down and focusing attention. And maybe also a certain desire to understand the context of something, to see things not as isolated but to understand the wider webs of meaning and relations they are connected to.

Sofia

Earlier on we mentioned that reading is like having a conversation with the author, like talking with someone that you otherwise wouldn't have access to. Because I think the best way to share information is by talking to someone, but that's not always possible, especially in a queer context. You may not know anyone who's facing the same situation.

Julia

Do you ever imagine that you're having a conversation with the author of a book you're reading?

Yusser

Recently, in the summer, I was reading 'Of Cities and Women' by Etel Adnan, which is this series of letters that she wrote. I was reading it by the sea, and she writes about the sea a lot. There was this one sentence that really got to me. It felt like she was echoing a sentiment I spoke about earlier with a friend, that is related to the sea. The line was about being held hostage by the

sea. And suddenly I felt all these connections and then I underlined the sentence and started writing this whole blurb of text in the margin of that book. It felt like conversing in a way, sharing ideas across time and space.

Golnar For me, it's similar to what all of you have said. Reading is like accessing the under-layer of the world that flows at a different pace, it's like a different network of relating to other people, whether it's conversing, or listening to one another, or being annoyed by the author, there are a lot of affective thinking experiences that you can only have when reading.

Yusser It's about companionship. You don't always have access to that and that's when you go to books!

This conversation, which was supposed to last for about an hour, ended up going on until long into the night, because there were so many questions, so many thoughts, and so many tangents that we just couldn't resist embarking on. For the sake of brevity, large parts of our conversation have been edited out. After about three hours, we left the table tired but also energised and inspired, since so many new connections and ideas had been sparked.

Block 3:

November–December 2024

Queerdom as a state of being, as a backdrop that defines the fibres of everyday life. Queer-dom as in a house for the queers, a refuge of care and resistance, a collectively built home for those influenced by a marginal existence.

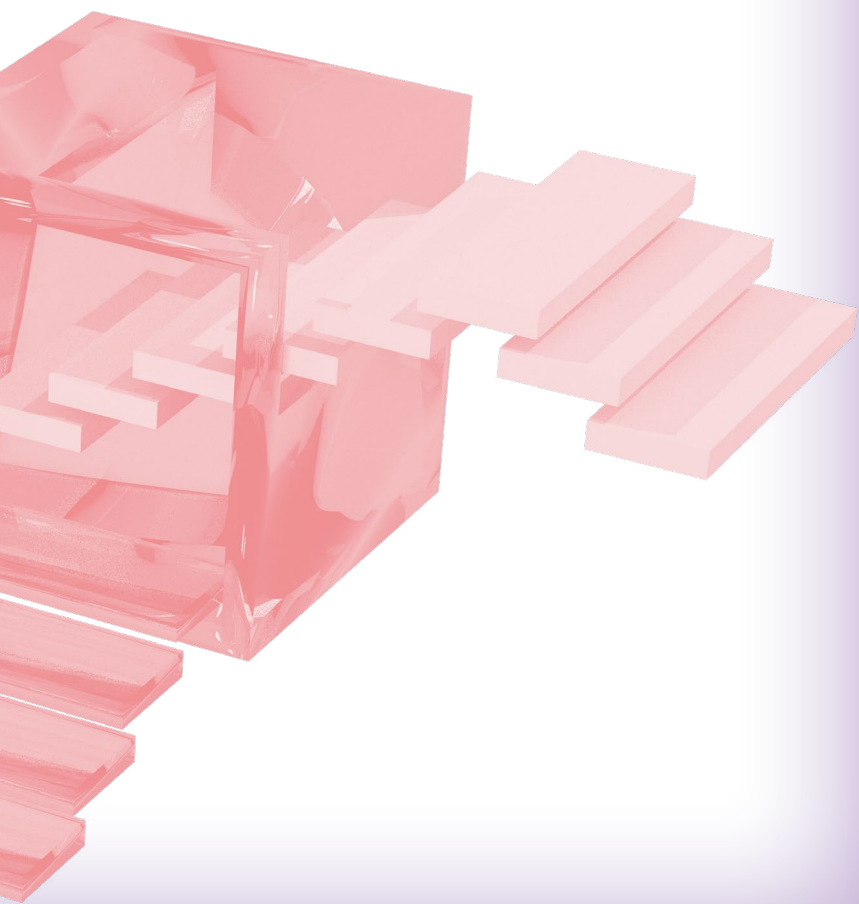
This reading block explored different facets of queerdom in everyday life, as it is moulded throughout time, and in search of connection and liberation. Through playful reading methods, we dove into the shaping of queer subjectivities and practices of community building, all while renouncing the appeal to liberalism and refusing to be weaponised.

Queerdom

Wormholes, Time-warps, and Unruly Tides

On Queer Time and Space





Wormholes, Time-warps, and Unruly Tides

November 3rd 2024, Roodkapje

This event took place in the cultural venue Roodkapje, which, at the time, was located close to Rotterdam's central station. Roodkapje's Anarchive, a space covered in posters made during participatory collaging and riso-printing workshops, served as the setting for this reading session. Spread throughout the space, covering the dusty floor and layered across the walls were snippets of texts on how queer bodies grow up and age, how capitalism imposes linear, production-oriented temporalities, and how disability and trauma alter the texture of time.

In a choose-your-own-journey style, participants could follow three different timelines through the textual snippets: past, present, and future. People were invited to annotate the pages, drawing connections to texts on other timelines, allowing the quotes to grow and shift with new layers of thoughts and questions. The room grew silent as people wandered from text to text, stretching to read snippets high up on the wall, or crouching to look at texts on the floor.



Some participants enjoyed the unpredictability of the timelines, which were wandering back and forth between different texts. Others found it hard to concentrate on small snippets while

lacking the wider context of the text they were taken from and decided to 'disobey' the curated journeys by reading only quotes from the same text. People recorded trying to find a logic within the timelines in a desire for linearity, while the journeys were weaving threads of thought, rather than chains of events, conveying a sense of complexity and denying a linear path to past or future.

Some of the snippets triggered intense emotions, bringing participants back to their own, often painful experiences of growing up queer. Other texts highlighted the focus on the short-term future that capitalism imposes, often dismissing the past, or fictionalising it in order to justify concepts like the nation state and imposing norms on the present. For instance, the nuclear family is portrayed as the only viable form of community, which, especially for queer folks, often results in a sense of isolation and numbness. The conversation affirmed the urgency for building community and participants stuck around, caught up in conversation, long after the ending of the event.



“ It is so hard for a queer person to become an adult. Deprived of the markers of life's passage, they lolled about in a neverland dreamworld. They didn't get married. They didn't have children. They didn't buy homes or have job-jobs. The best that could be aimed for was an academic placement and a lover who eventually tired of pansexual sport-fucking and settled down with you to raise a rescue animal in a rentcontrolled apartment. ”

Michelle Tea. *Black Wave*. 2016.

For the full source and list of readings for this session go to page 124.

Reading Methods

Check-in Question: *Are you often late?*

Choose-your-own-journey Spatial Reading

This method is especially suitable for a selection of texts that speak to the same subject from different angles and where a non-linear, experimental approach to reading is desired.

Since the reading session was about non-normative ways of experiencing and relating to time, it took the shape of a spatial choose-your-own-adventure journey, where participants travel back and forth between different texts.

Preparation:

Choose a few texts that you would like to take quotes from.

Experiment with creating sequences with the quotes to curate different journeys that weave thematic or associative threads. In our case, we created three timelines called PAST, PRESENT, and FUTURE, but these could differ.

For your own overview (since this can get quite complex), you can name the quotes in the order of: PAST_1, PAST_2, PAST_3, ..., PRESENT_1, PRESENT_2, PRESENT_3..., etc. Additionally, give each quote a random but unique number or name.

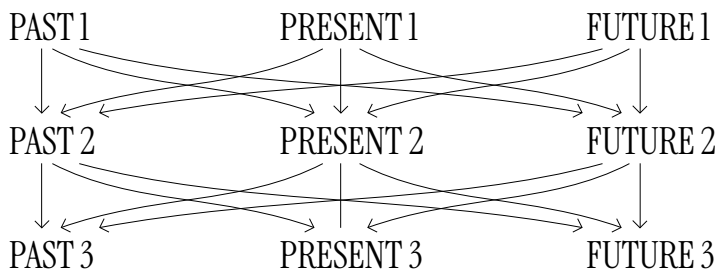
Participants can travel in-between the journeys, but in 'chronological order'. For instance, you can go from PAST_1 to FUTURE_2 to FUTURE_3 to PRESENT_4 to PAST_5, etc. Each quote corresponds to a place in the timeline (for example: timeline FUTURE, sequence number 3) and a random number or name that aids navigation in the space.

Place each quote and its source on an A3 document in a large font. If the quotes are too long, you can use larger paper or tape several A3 sheets together. Under the text, add different options of where people can go from there. In our case, this was "Go to the PAST – [nr or name of text]", "Go to the PRESENT – [nr or name of text]", and "Go to the FUTURE – [nr or name of text]".

Print the numbers or names of the texts on separate A4 sheets so they can be seen from a distance.

Distribute the texts and their corresponding numbers or names on the floors and walls throughout the space. Keep in mind that people of different heights and abilities should be able to read them.

How coherent the journeys are depends on how much time and energy you can put into curating them and drawing connections. You could even write your own texts or stories specifically for this format. A visual reference has been included for guidance below.



How to use this method::

After a short introduction, participants can start with any quote in the room and create their own journeys through past, present, and future.

While reading, people are invited to underline certain parts that resonate with them or annotate the text with thoughts and questions. This way, the texts change with time and people can read each other's anonymous annotations.

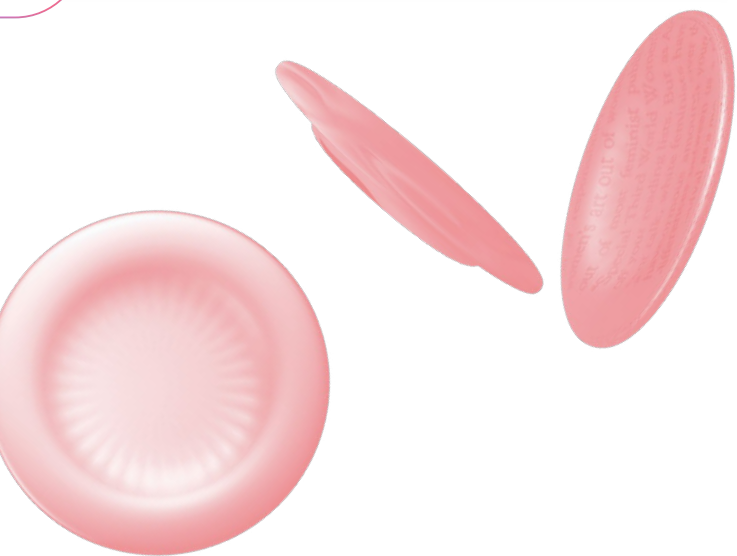
People can follow their journeys for about 40 minutes to an hour, afterwards gather everyone back together to discuss the experience and thoughts that arose.

This method was contributed by Reading Rhythms Club.

A Seat at the Table

On Queer Liberation and Community





With Queer Rotterdam
and Katayun Taraporevala

A Seat at the Table

November 16th 2024, Queer Rotterdam

A long table, clad in canvas fabric, prepared for dinner with cutlery, plates, pens, and bowls of colourful vegetable sticks, surrounded by chairs in different shapes and colours welcomed our guests in the (by now former) space of Queer Rotterdam, a colourfully decorated sports hall. Queer Rotterdam is a collective of local queers, who, for the most part, have full-time jobs and dedicate their free time to organise events exclusively for the queer community.

The session was a collaboration with Katayun Taraporevala's "Queer Migrant Dinners": a series of events that aim to create space for queer migrants to build community through collective meals. Together with Queer Rotterdam member Sofia Carnelli and drawer, artist, and community facilitator Katayun, we presented the three course literary menu of the evening. While sharing homemade bread and carrots, celeriac and cucumber dipped in guacamole, tzatziki, and bean paste, we discussed who gets a seat at the table. Together, we wondered if we necessarily needed to sit around a table, where the number of chairs is always limited, or if we could gather on the floor instead. Between each course, we played a round of musical chairs to mix up the seating order, while adjusting the game so everyone would get a spot.

Underneath their spoon, people could find quotes from texts responding to the role of food in queer communities: communal cooking as a way to provide for each other's needs and to nurture forms of kinship alternative to the nuclear family. People silently read their quotes and reached across the table to exchange snippets of texts. While enjoying the main course, rice and pumpkin stew, we exchanged thoughts on the quotes we encountered and spoke about our own chosen families and the different struggles we are involved in. Throughout, people doodled and scribbled on the table cloth, creating a tapestry of images and words.

After changing seats again, dessert was served: rawa, an Indian sweet semolina pudding, with different toppings like chocolate, nuts, raisins, and jams. Over dessert, we played a game of broken telephone with excerpts from Audre Lorde's "Women Redefining Difference", which speaks about how capitalism tries to divide us by hierarchising human differences. Quotes were whispered from ear to ear, filtered through people's experience, transformed each time, until reaching the last person who spoke the altered quote out loud. We noted that the quotes became simplified in the process,

making it easier to understand, but in some cases the meaning also shifted from the original intention.

“ We can develop multi-issue coalitions with everyone who's struggling for social equality and economic justice. When people from different walks of life find themselves together in a collective protest, later they remember who stood tall with them when times were tough. That's how genuine solidarity is forged.

An injury to one is an injury to all. When we allow ourselves to be split along lines of oppression, we always lose. But when we put forward a collective list of demands together, and fight to defend each other from attacks, we frequently win. ”

Leslie Feinberg. *In the Spirit of Stonewall*, 95–105. 1998.

For the full source and list of readings for this session go to page 124.





Photo credit: Lea Novi





Photo credit: Lea Novi





Photo credit: Lea Novi





Photo credit: Lea Novi

Reading Methods

Check-in Question: *What dish makes you think about community?*

Reading Menu

This reading method is especially suitable for engaging with a collection of texts that can cross-pollinate each other and trigger conversations over a shared meal.

During this session, different texts and reading methods accompanied the courses of a menu, weaving conversation, flavours, and textual snippets. During the starter, we introduced and discussed the question 'Who gets a seat at the table?', during the main course, we exchanged and annotated the quotes hidden beneath our cutlery, and while enjoying our desserts we played a game of broken telephone. After each course we played a modified version of musical chairs to change up the seating order.

Starter: Opening Question

This method can help to establish common ground and get to know people's reflections and knowledge prior to the reading of any text together.

How to use this method:



Come up with an open question that can trigger conversations about the topic that you want to focus your reading session on.



Invite everyone to reflect on the question and share their thoughts with the whole group. Don't try to steer the conversation too much in a particular direction, instead let it flow organically. Everyone's reflections, references, and anecdotes are welcome.



Palate Cleanser: Modified Musical Chairs

A game of musical chairs can be played between meals to change the seating order and the dynamic of the table.

How to use this method:

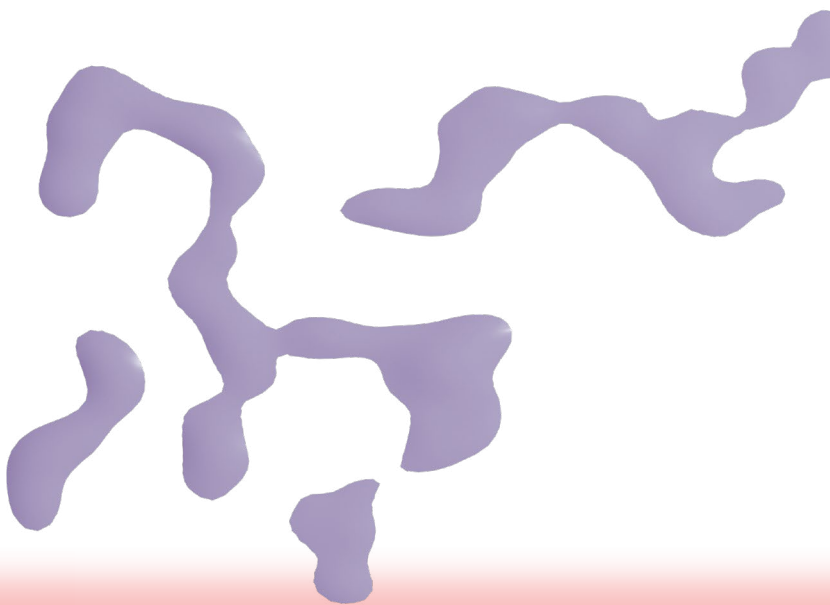


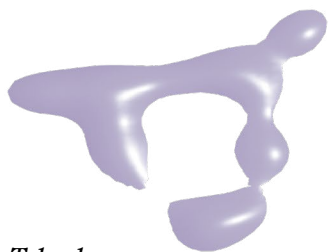
Music is played out loud and people are invited to walk around freely. When the music stops, everyone quickly picks a spot. The difference between this version and a regular game of musical chairs is that there are always enough seats for everyone.

Main Course: Exchanging Quotes and Table-Cloth Annotation

How to use this method:

- A small piece of paper with a quote is hidden beneath everyone's cutlery and a textile marker is placed next to it. The quotes should all differ and can come from various texts that have specific angles on the same subjects.
- When the main course is served, participants are invited to have a look at their quote and read it silently.
- Afterwards, people can exchange their quotes, write reflections, and doodle on the tablecloth. They can also share thoughts with their neighbours and negotiate who passes which quote to whom, reaching their hands towards each other across the table.

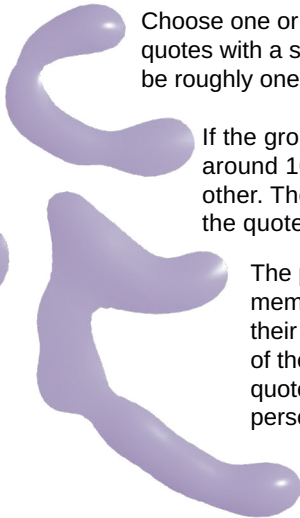




Dessert: Whisper Translation Telephone

This method shows how words and meaning can be interpreted and filtered through people's own understanding and frame of reference.

How to use this method:



Choose one or several one-to-two-sentence quotes with a strong message. There should be roughly one quote per 10 participants.

If the group is too big, split the table into groups of around 10 participants who are sitting next to each other. The person at the end of the line receives the quote.

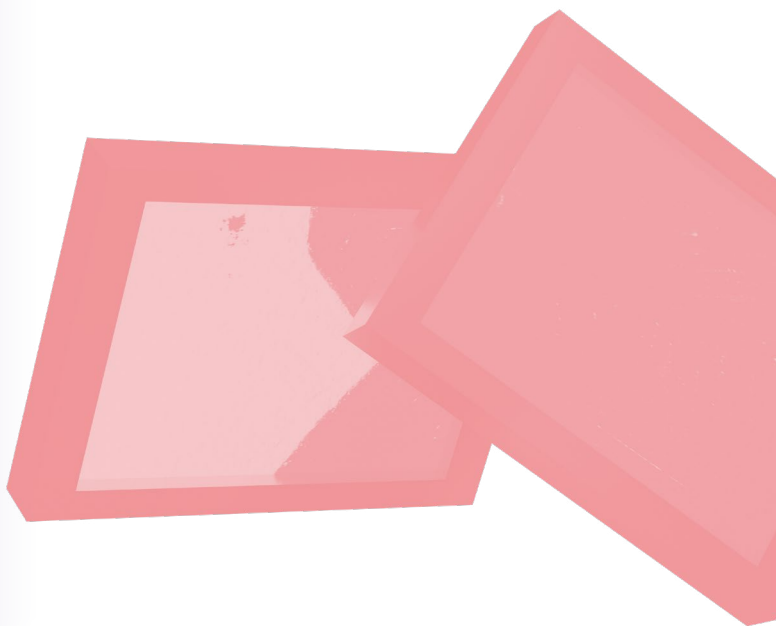
The person with the quote needs to simplify and memorise the quote, then whisper it into the ear of their neighbour. This person whispers it into the ear of their neighbour, and so on. This way, the original quote becomes translated and morphed with every person it passes through.

The last person in the group speaks the quote out loud, sharing it with everyone present.

These methods were contributed by Sofia Carnelli, Katayun Taraporevala, and Reading Rhythms Club.

Don't Fall for Framing

On Pinkwashing and Homonationalism





With Queer Feminist Books

Don't Fall for Framing

14 December 2024, Poortgebouw

The last session of our year-long reading curriculum took place at Poortgebouw, a legalised squat that is home to many people. Poortgebouw also houses a bar, a swap shop, a concert space, and the independent, small-scale library of Queer Feminist Books, where all the shelves are filled with queer and intersectional feminist literature.

The atmosphere in Poortgebouw's bar where we gathered to read was generous and welcoming. We began with a round of introductions about which media outlets or platforms we are getting information from and then split into two groups to read excerpts from Jasbir Puar's "Terrorist Assemblages", and a chapter on "Homonationalism" by Sarah Schulman.

To unravel the complex academic language, we read Puar's text sentence by sentence. At first, participants were intimidated by the denseness of the piece, but many found that making sense of it together felt empowering, although we were critical about the inaccessibility of the language. Puar speaks about how queerness has been incorporated in the nation state project through what she calls 'homonormative subjects': queers who are obedient workers and consumers in the capitalist economy and who are used to justify violence against supposedly homophobic 'terrorist populations'.



Although Schulman's text is problematic in many regards, people found it useful in making sense of the term homonationalism through specific examples where queer people align themselves with the interests of their imperialist states. She also talks about cases where homonationalism is actively refused through connecting struggles against imperialism and struggles for queer liberation.

We discussed how we have encountered homonationalism in media and popular narratives. Many people were glad to have come across a word to name this phenomenon and the agenda it serves. Together, we analysed a presentation on different homonationalist narratives, especially the pinkwashing of the Zionist occupation of Palestine. Homonationalism also plays a big role in the Netherlands, through the legacy of gay politician Pim Fortuyn and his islamophobic anti-immigration politics, amongst others. Discussing and analysing these narratives helped us to understand our own implications and how we must refuse for our lives to be used as justification for the oppression of others.

- “ Some may strenuously object to the suggestion that queer identities, like their “less radical” counterparts, homosexual, gay, and lesbian identities, are also implicated in ascendant white American nationalist formations, preferring to see queerness as singularly transgressive of identity norms. This focus on transgression, however, is precisely the term by which queerness narrates its own sexual exceptionalism. While we can point to the obvious problems with the emancipatory, missionary pulses of certain (U.S., western) feminisms and of gay and lesbian liberation, queerness has its own exceptionalist desires: exceptionalism is a founding impulse, indeed the very core of a queerness that claims itself as an anti-, trans-, or unidentity. The paradigm of gay liberation and emancipation has produced all sorts of troubling narratives: about the greater homophobia of immigrant communities and communities of color, about the stricter family values and mores in these communities, about a certain prerequisite migration from home, about coming-out teleologies. We have less understanding of queerness as a biopolitical project, one that both parallels and intersects with that of multiculturalism, the ascendancy of whiteness, and may collude with or collapse into liberationist paradigms. While liberal underpinnings serve to constantly recenter the normative gay or lesbian subject as exclusively liberatory, these same tendencies labor to insistently recenter the normative queer subject as an exclusively transgressive one. ”

Jasbir Puar. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. 2007. For the full source and list of readings for this session go to page 125.

Reading Methods

Check-in Question: *Which media outlets or platforms do you get information from?*

Complementary Reading

This method is especially suitable for engaging with two texts about the same subject matter that are written from different perspectives. The texts might complement or contradict each other, but ultimately they will help you cover more ground on the subject matter.

How to use this method:

❖ Briefly present the texts to participants and split into two groups depending on who wants to read which text.

❖ In each group the text is read out loud. Depending on how difficult the text is, this might be done paragraph by paragraph or sentence by sentence. In the latter case, there should be a lot of space for addressing unknown words and asking questions. See method 'Slow Reading & Indexing' (page 57) for further information.

❖ Reflections on how the topic resonates with your own experience and in your environment are encouraged. Give room for tangents, questions, and concerns.

❖ After the reading, the two groups come together again to share with each other what they learned from the texts, which obstacles they faced, and what conversations emerged. How did the specific text inform people's view on the subject? Are there major contradictions between the texts? Do they fill in each other's gaps?

Annotated Presentation

During the reading session, we looked at a presentation that showed news items and images of how the Zionist occupation and narratives of US exceptionalism are pinkwashed. We discussed the presentation through the lens of what we learned about homonationalism.

How to use this method:

Create a presentation with different visual propaganda materials and analyse together what the underlying intentions are and what associations the propaganda wants to evoke.

These methods were contributed by Queer Feminist Books in conversation with Reading Rhythms Club.

Reading List

In the spirit of this publication, we crafted our own citation format, because we felt the need to destabilise some of the existing standards in academic citation. Most notably, we wanted to deprioritise the last name as a mark of professionalism and note-worthiness and include the possibility to mention who brought us to which source. In a sense we wanted to pay homage to how references travel and get introduced.

For publications where multiple texts were used, the citations are 'nested', meaning first the overall publication is cited and afterwards the chapters are cited in a listing. Some of the citations purposefully include tangents: comments, thoughts or other information about the source that we found relevant to mention. Aside from this, we use the Indigenous name for North America: Turtle Island.

Introduction

bell hooks. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom, Theory as Liberatory Practice*, pages 59–75. Routledge, New York (Turtle Island), 1994. 'We read this text alongside Ismatu Gwendolyn's 'you've been traumatized into hating reading' during the reading session 'Making the Seams Legible' at the end of March 2025. We went back and forth between both texts, drawing connections and collectively discussing our relationships to reading and theory.'

Donna Haraway. *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*. Feminist Studies, Vol. 14, No. 3, pages 575–599. Feminist Studies, College Park (Turtle Island), 1988. <https://philpapers.org/archive/HARSKT.pdf>. Retrieved 25.08.2025.

Ismatu Gwendolyn. *you've been traumatized into hating reading (and it makes you easier to oppress)*. Threadings, published February 2024. <https://www.threadings.io/youve-been-traumatized-into-hating/>. Retrieved 05.08.2025. 'The reading session 'Making the Seams Legible' was part of HumDrumPress' "Open Book" format: an experiment in making the voices and ideas usually contained in a physical publication publicly accessible from the very first moment in the publishing cycle.'

Renée Turner (author), Michelle Teran, Marc Herbst, Vivian

Sky Rehberg & the Promiscuous Care Study Group (editors). Promiscuous Infrastructures, *Slow, Situated & Reparative Reading: THE GARDEN EDITION*, pages 122–129. The Journal of Aesthetics & Protest, Leipzig (Germany), 2024. 'In November 2022, we were welcomed in Renée Turner's allotment garden for a collective reading of this text. Taking turns tending to the fire in the stove, surrounded by the dense greenery of different trees and shrubs, we discussed the importance of resisting the constant pace of urgency, of refusing the idea of mastery, and of the way the surrounding seeps into the reading. This reading session had a profound influence on our practice as RRC.'

You Come to Text Hungry for Connection: A Conversation on the Urgency of Collective Reading

bell hooks. *CHOOSING THE MARGIN AS A SPACE OF RADICAL OPENNESS*. Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media, No. 36, pages 15–23, 1989. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44111660>. Accessed 05.08.2025. Recommended by Yusser al Obaidi.

Dean Spade. *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (and the Next)*. Verso, London (England), 2020. Recommended by Sofia Carnelli.

Etel Adnan. *Of Cities and Women*. The Post-Apollo Press, Sausalito (Turtle Island), 1993. Recommended by Yusser al Obaidi.

Haytham El-Wardany (author), Jennifer Leigh Peterson & Robin Moger (translators). *How to Disappear*. Kayfa ta, 2013. Recommended by Golnar Abbasi.

Ismatu Gwendolyn. *you've been traumatized into hating reading (and it makes you easier to oppress)*. Threadings, published February 2024. <https://www.threadings.io/youve-been-traumatized-into-hating/>. Retrieved 05.08.2025.

Juan Carlos Pérez Cortés. *Relationship Anarchy: Occupy Intimacy!* Independently published, 2022. Recommended by Sofia Carnelli.

Paul B. Preciado (author) & Kevin Gerry Dunn (translator). *Countersexual Manifesto*. Columbia University Press, New York (Turtle Island), 2018. Recommended by Golnar Abbasi.

Sophie K. Rosa. *Radical Intimacy*. Pluto Press, London (England), 2023. Recommended by Sofia Carnelli.

Ursula K. le Guin. *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia*. Harper & Row, New York (Turtle Island), 1974. Recommended by Sofia Carnelli.

Reading Rhythms, ReThreading Nanzi's Web

Isistra 'Ayaya' Molina (chef) and Marianne Sanne-Crestian (transcriber). Arripa (by Ayaya). 'This recipe by Isistra 'Ayaya' Molina was transcribed by Marianne Sanne-Crestian somewhere in the early 2000s and has since remained a family recipe, passed on to Julian Crestian together with whom we prepared these delicious Curaçaoan pumpkin pancakes for the reading session.'

Jurino Ignacio. *De Complete Antilliaanse Keuken, Arepa*. Terrizzi, 2019. Recommended by Julian Crestian & Leomar Imperator. 'We prepared corn arepas based on this recipe for the reading session.'

Leomar Imperator. Reskoek. 'Leomar Imperator shared his recipe for Reskoek, a Curaçaoan rice pancake, which we prepared for the reading session.'

Nilda Geerdink-Jesurun Pinto. *Kuenta di e araña Kompa Nanzi / Stories of the Spider Kompa Nanzi*. Fundashon Instituto Raúl Römer, Willemstad (Curaçao), 2018. Recommended by Julian Crestian & Leomar Imperator.

Cha Tiger engañá / How Cha Tiger was tricked, pages 20–27.

Mondongo grandi ta guli mondongo chikí / The big stomach gobbles up the little stomach, pages. 28–31.

Un pustamentu di Nanzi / Nanzi makes a bet, pages 86–91.

Nilda Geerdink-Jesurun Pinto. *Nanzi Stories: Curaçao Folklore*. Nilda Pinto Foundation Curaçao, Curaçao, 1972. Recommended by Julian Crestian & Leomar Imperator.

Compa Nanzi and Cha Tiger, pages 13–15.

Compa Nanzi and the Devil, page 24.

Compa Nanzi and the Spotted Cow, pages 66–67.

My Feelings Are a Witness

Haya Abu Nasser. *At the Cliff of Death: A Poem from Gaza*. Mizna (website), February 2024. <https://mizna.org/literary/haya-abu-nasser/>. Retrieved 19.06.2025. Recommended by Yusser al Obaidi. 'Haya Abu Nasser is an activist and writer originally from Deir-Sneid, Palestine. After being internally displaced four times during the ongoing genocide, she managed to cross the border into Egypt in March 2024 and is currently studying for her Master's degree.'

Hiba Abu Nada (author) and Huda Fakhreddine (translator). *Not Just Passing*. Mizna (website), December 2023. <https://mizna.org/literary/not-just-passing/>. Retrieved 26.06.2025. Recommended by Yusser al Obaidi. 'Hiba Abu Nada was a Palestinian poet, writer, and activist, who was martyred on October 20th, 2023, by Zionist airstrikes. Her last social media post on October 18th, translated by Fady Joudah, says: Each of us in Gaza is either witness to or martyr for liberation. Each is waiting to see which of the two they'll become up there with God. We have already started building a new city in Heaven. Doctors without patients. No one bleeds. Teachers in uncrowded classrooms. No yelling at students. New families without pain or sorrow. Journalists writing up and taking photos of eternal love. They're all from Gaza. In Heaven, the new Gaza is free of siege. It is taking shape now.'

Ibrahim Nasrallah (author) and Huda Fakhreddine (translator). *Mary of Gaza*. Mizna (website), March 2024. <https://mizna.org/literary/mary-of-gaza/>. Retrieved 26.06.2025. Recommended by Yusser al Obaidi. 'Ibrahim Nasrallah is a Palestinian poet born in Amman, Jordan, who won multiple prizes for his literary work. The poem 'Mary of Gaza' was originally published in the form of a video showing images of the devastation and suffering brought onto Gaza by the ongoing Zionist aggression. It is available on YouTube.'

Mira Mattar. *1 Poem: 10 November 2023*. Mizna (website), February 2024. <https://mizna.org/literary/mira-mattar/>. Retrieved 19.06.2025. Recommended by Yusser al Obaidi.

Refaat Alareer (author) and Sinan Antoon (translator). *If I Must Die*. In *These Times* (online magazine), published December 2023, <https://in-thetimes.com/article/refaat-alareer-israeli-occupation-palestine>. Retrieved 20.06.2025. 'The Palestinian poet Refaat Alareer was martyred by the Zionist occupation on December 6th, 2023, along with his brother, his brother's son, his sister, and her three children. His poem 'If I Must Die' was circulated and translated widely after his martyrdom.'

Yusser al Obaidi. *My Feelings are a Witness: Poetry from Urgency and Solidarity*. Reading Rhythms Club, Rotterdam (The Netherlands), 2024. 'Three of Yusser's poems were self-published by RRC, KIOSK Rotterdam and Yusser al Obaidi in the format of a zine, alongside the other poems we read that evening.'

The Love for Liberation is Poetic.

My Feelings Are a Witness.

West=best03.

Solidarity Hums

WORKNOT! (Golnar Abbasi and Arvand Pourabbasi). *Solidarity Hums: On Protest and Intersections of Struggle*. WORKNOT!, Rotterdam (The Netherlands), 2024. 'This zine was self-published by WORKNOT! for the occasion of our reading session.'

Wreading Geofinance

Aristotle (author) and Benjamin Jowett (translator). *Politics: A Treatise on Government*, Chapter 11, pages 19–21. Batoche Books, Kitchener (Turtle Island), 1999. Recommended by Sami Hammana.

Charles Bernstein. *Attack of the Difficult Poems, Wreading, Writing, and Wresponding*, pages 49–50. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago (Turtle Island), 2011. Recommended by Sami Hammana.

Gabrielle Hecht. *Interscalar Vehicles for an African Anthropocene: On Waste, Temporality, and Violence*. *Radical History Review* 127, pages 87–102. Duke University Press, Durham (Turtle Island), 2017. Retrieved from <https://gabriellehecht.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Hecht2018-CA-Interscalar-Vehicles.pdf> on 03.07.2025. Recommended by Sami Hammana.

Paddy Chayefsky (screenwriter) & Sidney Lumet (director). *The Network* (movie script), pages 18–19. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1975. Script retrieved from <https://www.scribd.com/document/369212411/Network-1976-by-Paddy-Chayefsky>, on 03.07.2025. Recommended by Sami Hammana. 'The movie script contains passages that are racist and islamophobic and is full of capitalist propaganda. It was included in the reader because it gives insight into the discourse and ideology around finance.'

Suhail Malik. Collapse Vol. VIII: Casino Real, *The Ontology of Finance: Price, Power, and the Arkhéderivative*, pages 635–636. Urbanomic, Falmouth (England), 2014. Recommended by Sami Hammana.

Timothy Clark. The Value of Ecocriticism, *The Challenge for Prose Narrative*, page 84. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (England), 2019. Recommended by Sami Hammana.

How Many Friends Does it Take to Build a Frame?

Antonio Negri & Michael Hardt. Commonwealth, *De Singularitate 1: Of Love Possessed*, pages 179–188. Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Turtle Island), 2009.

Arturo Escobar. Pluriversal Politics: The Real and the Possible, *Introduction: Another Possible is Possible*, pages 1–12. Duke University Press, Durham (Turtle Island), 2020. Recommended by a DHZ volunteer.

Charles Dobson. *Grassroots Rot: How citizen's groups destroy themselves*. The Citizen's Handbook (website). <https://citizen-shandbook.org/wilt.html>. Retrieved 05.07.2025. Recommended by a DHZ volunteer.

Dean Spade. Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (and the Next). Verso, London (England), 2020.

Donna Haraway. Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene, *Chapter 3: Symptoiesis*, pages 58–61. Duke University Press, Durham (Turtle Island), 2016. Recommended by a DHZ volunteer.

Elena Schäggen, Prajal Pradhan & Stefanie L. Becker. *Thwarted visions of change: power and demographics in repair cafes and urban sustainability transitions*. Urban Transformations 4, 1, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42854-022-00031-x>. Recommended by a DHZ volunteer.

Ivan Illich. Shadow Work, *Vernacular Values*, pages 27–52. Marion Boyars Inc., New Hampshire (Turtle Island) & London (England), 1981. Recommended by a DHZ volunteer.

Leslie Feinberg. Transgender Liberation: A Movement whose Time Has Come, *Breaking the Silence*, pages 5–7. World View Forum, New York (Turtle Island), 1992.

Leslie Feinberg. Trans Liberation: Beyond Pink and Blue, *Learning from Experience*, pages 113–128. Beacon Press, Boston (Turtle Island), 1992.

Island), 1998. Recommended by a DHZ volunteer.

Lynn Margulis. *Symbiotic Planet: A New Look at Evolution*, Chapter 1: *Symbiosis Everywhere*, pages 7–16. Basic Books, New York (Turtle Island), 1998. Recommended by a DHZ volunteer.

Paul B. Preciado. *An Apartment on Uranus, We Say Revolution*, pages 43–44. Semiotext(e), South Pasadena (Turtle Island), 2020. Recommended by a DHZ volunteer.

Søren Kierkegaard (author), Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong (editors & translators). *Kierkegaard's Writings, XVI, Volume 16: Works of Love, Our Duty to Remain in Love's Debt to One Another*, pages 175–204. Princeton University Press, Princeton (Turtle Island), 2013. Recommended by a DHZ volunteer.

Ursula K. le Guin. *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia*. Harper & Row, New York (Turtle Island), 1974. Recommended by a DHZ volunteer.

Volunteers of the Doe-Het-Zelf Werkplaats (authors & contributors), Tomi & Christian (assemblers). *On Mutual Aid in Practice*. Doe-Het-Zelf Werkplaats, Rotterdam (The Netherlands), 2024. 'This zine was assembled by the volunteers of the Doe-Het-Zelf Werkplaats for the occasion of our reading session. It includes a brief history of the Doe-Het-Zelf Werkplaats, and answers to the questions 'What is important about what happens at DHZ?', 'Why are you interested in DHZ?' and 'How would you describe what happens at DHZ?' and excerpts from a variety of texts (cited above), chosen and introduced by the volunteers.'

Reading Between the Lines

Gemeente Rotterdam. Retrieved 05.08.2025. 'During the reading session we analysed the language used in the housing and urban development plans of the municipality of Rotterdam.'

StartR flexwoningen. <https://www.rotterdam.nl/startr-flexwoningen>.

Wijkprofiel Rotterdam 2024. <https://wijkprofiel.rotterdam.nl/2024/rotterdam>.

Woonvisie. <https://www.rotterdam.nl/woonvisie>.

Jitske-Sophie Venema & Mark Hoogstad. *'Het onkruid op Zuid*

is zo langzaamaan verwijderd.' AD (online news outlet), published February 2017. <https://www.ad.nl/rotterdam/het-onkru-id-op-zuid-is-zo-langzaamaan-verwijderd-a0dcedfb/>. Retrieved 05.08.2025. 'This interview titled 'The Weeds in South are Gradually Being Removed' makes it clear how nature metaphors and colonial logic operate in urban development discourse and practice.'

JP van Eesteren. *Little C wint BNA Beste Gebouw van het Jaar Award in de categorie Leefbaarheid en Sociale Cohesie*. Published May 2022. <https://www.jpvanesteren.nl/nieuws/little-c-wint-bna-beste-gebouw-van-het-jaar-award-de-categorie-leefbaarheid-en-sociale>. Retrieved 05.08.2025.

Kees Jonker. *De economische zuivering in de stad*. Dagblad010 (online news outlet), published February 2019. <https://dagblad010.nl/Columns/de-economische-zuivering-in-de-stad->. Retrieved 05.08.2025. Recommended by Lila Athanasiadou.

Kees Jonker. *Geheim stuk over de Wijken in Balans*. Dagblad010 (online news outlet), published October 2021. <https://dagblad010.nl/Politiek/geheim-stuk-over-de-wijken-in-balans->. Retrieved 05.08.2025. Recommended by Lila Athanasiadou.

Leefstijlvinder. *Het BSR Model*. <https://leefstijlvinder.nl/het-bsr-model/#>. Retrieved 05.08.2025. 'The BSR model classifies people into four different lifestyles based on a personality test. It has been used in urban planning in Rotterdam to determine the 'ideal lifestyle demographic' for a specific new area.'

Leslie Kern. *Gentrification is Inevitable and Other Lies*, *Gentrification is Natural*. Verso, London (England), 2022. Recommended by Lila Athanasiadou.

Lila from BPW. *BPW: "The visionless woonvisie is just throwing oil onto the fire."* Doorbraak, published March 2024. <https://www.doorbraak.eu/bpw-the-visionless-woonvisie-is-just-throwing-oil-on-to-the-fire/>. Retrieved 05.08.2025.

Open Rotterdam (online news outlet.) *Explainer 15 jaar Rotterdamwet: Wat heeft de omstreden wet de stad opgeleverd?* Published March 2021. <https://openrotterdam.nl/explainer-rotterdamwet/>. Retrieved 05.08.2025. Recommended by Lila Athanasiadou.

Tim Peeters. *Little C: In gelul kan je prima wonen*. Vers Beton (online magazine), published November 2020. <https://www.vers-beton.nl/2020/11/little-c-in-gelul-kan-je-prima-wonen/>. Retrieved 05.08.2025. Recommended by Lila Athanasiadou.

Wormholes, Time-warps, and Unruly Tides

Jack Halberstam. In *a Queer Time and Place, Queer Temporality and Postmodern Geographies*, pages 1–21. New York University Press, New York (Turtle Island), 2005.

Kathryn Bond Stockton. *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century*. Duke University Press, Durham (Turtle Island), 2009.

Këo & Senka. Nightly Manifesto, Episode 2: *Queer Time*, April 12th 2021. Radio Worm, Rotterdam (The Netherlands.) 'These characters were invented by Keö and Senka as theory-fictional embodiments of queer time for a radio episode, which can be listened back to on Nightly Manifesto's Mixcloud: <https://www.mixcloud.com/NightlyManifesto/episode-2-queer-time/>.' Characters featured are:

The Trans Time Traveller.

The Ghost.

Schrödinger's Cat.

The Dream.

Michelle Tea. *Black Wave*. Feminist Press, New York City (Turtle Island), 2016.

Rolando Vázquez. *Modernity Coloniality and Visibility: The Politics of Time*. Errant Journal, Issue 1: When Are We?, Amsterdam (The Netherlands), 2020.

Sophie Hoyle. *Chronic Dissonance: Slowing Up/Speeding Down*. Errant Journal, Issue 1: When Are We?, Amsterdam (the Netherlands), 2020.

A Seat at the Table

Audre Lorde. When I Dare to Be Powerful: Women so Empowered are Dangerous, *Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference*, pages 71–87. Penguin Books, London (England), 2020.

carla bergman & Nick Montgomery. *Joyful Militancy: Building Thriving Resistance in Toxic Times*. AK Press, Oakland (Turtle Island), 2017.

Leslie Feinberg. *Trans Liberation: Beyond Pink and Blue*, *In the*

Spirit of Stonewall, pages 95–105. Beacon Press, Boston (Turtle Island), 1998. ‘We recommended this text because Feinberg describes how often in liberation movements the loudest voices will be those who have the most to gain and the least to lose from change.’

Lindsey Danis (author) & Wren Awry (publisher). *Nourishing Resistance: Stories of Food, Protest, and Mutual Aid, Queer Potlucks Offer Food for Capitalist Critique and Collective Action*. PM Press, Binghamton (Turtle Island), 2023. Recommended by Katayun Taraporevala.

Zoe Adjonyoh (author) & Bryant Terry (publisher). *Stories, Art, and Recipes from Across the African Diaspora [A Cookbook], Queer Intelligence: We Mobilize Through Food*. 4 Color Books, 2021. Recommended by Katayun Taraporevala.

Don’t Fall for Framing

Jasbir Puar. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Duke University Press, Durham (Turtle Island), 2007.

Sarah Schulman, *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International. Homonationalism*, pages 103–132. Duke University Press, Durham (Turtle Island), 2012. Recommended by Queer Feminist Books. ‘This book should be read critically. Many examples, terms, and ideas invoked in the book normalise the zionist occupation of Palestine and generally represent a white savourist attitude. However, it contributed to popularising conversations about homonationalism and includes a clear, comprehensible description of the term coined by Jasbir Puar.’

Many of the references and resources here have shaped us, our political beliefs, and view of the world. Some caused us to shake our heads in disagreement and write back to the author in the margins. Others opened up new avenues of thought or provided different lenses through which we could understand the world. To everyone who works on distributing resources for free: thank you for giving us the opportunity to learn from them.

Colophon

HumDrumPress is a collaboration-based publisher. Roles and responsibilities are therefore shared by all parties, within their capacities. The following persons contributed in a multitude of ways to making this publication possible:

Amy Gowen, Carla Arcos, Cultural Workers Unite, Julian Crestian, Katayun Taraporevala, KIOSK Rotterdam (Flip Driest), Lea Novi, Leomar Imperator, Queer Rotterdam (Sofia Carnelli), Queer Feminist Books (Sam Portnoy), Sami Hammana, Tomi, Christian and the volunteers of the Doe-Het-Zelf Werkplaats, Wibke Bramesfeld, WORKNOT! (Golnar Abbasi and Arvand Pourabbasi), and Yusser al Obaidi.

Compiled, written, and designed by Reading Rhythms Club (Senka Milutinović and Julia Wilhelm).

ISBN: **978-90-834231-4-2**

Paper inside: Munken Pure 90 grams

Paper outside: Munken Pure Rough 300 grams

Typefaces:

Instrument Serif, designed by Rodrigo Fuenzalida and Jordan Egstad.

Arimo, designed by Steve Matteson.

Printed by: BALTO print

Edition 1: print run of 300

Funding Acknowledgements: Stimuleringsfonds NL (Creative Industries Fund NL); Gemeente Rotterdam (Municipality of Rotterdam)

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To get in touch with Reading Rhythms Club or find information about upcoming reading sessions, you can send an email to: reading.rhythms@protonmail.com

Or contact us on Instagram through: [@readingrhythmsclub](https://www.instagram.com/readingrhythmsclub)



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This book is a companion for collective reading, especially collective reading that sits outside of institutional spaces. It has been crafted by Reading Rhythms Club.

The pages within this book document a year-long experimental reading curriculum that explored the different social, political, and economic matters which affect our everyday lives. From the way protest chants travel across localities, to the language of gentrification, to the role of food in queer community building practices. This book includes playful reading methods such as performative storytelling, spatial reading choreographies, and critical neighbourhood walks, alongside a conversation on the urgency of collective reading.

Reading Rhythms Club (RRC) is an experimental reading group that works with a range of collaborators to host communal learning sessions which embrace tangents and discussion. Within RRC, reading is approached in a playful manner, and collective learning is favoured over the idea of gaining 'mastery' of a text. RRC provides resources and spaces of exchange to collectively make sense of the world around us and understand how the often violent infrastructures we constantly navigate are shaped. Together, we ask what possibilities for refusal there are and how we can create alternatives together.

ISBN: 978-90-834231-4-2

